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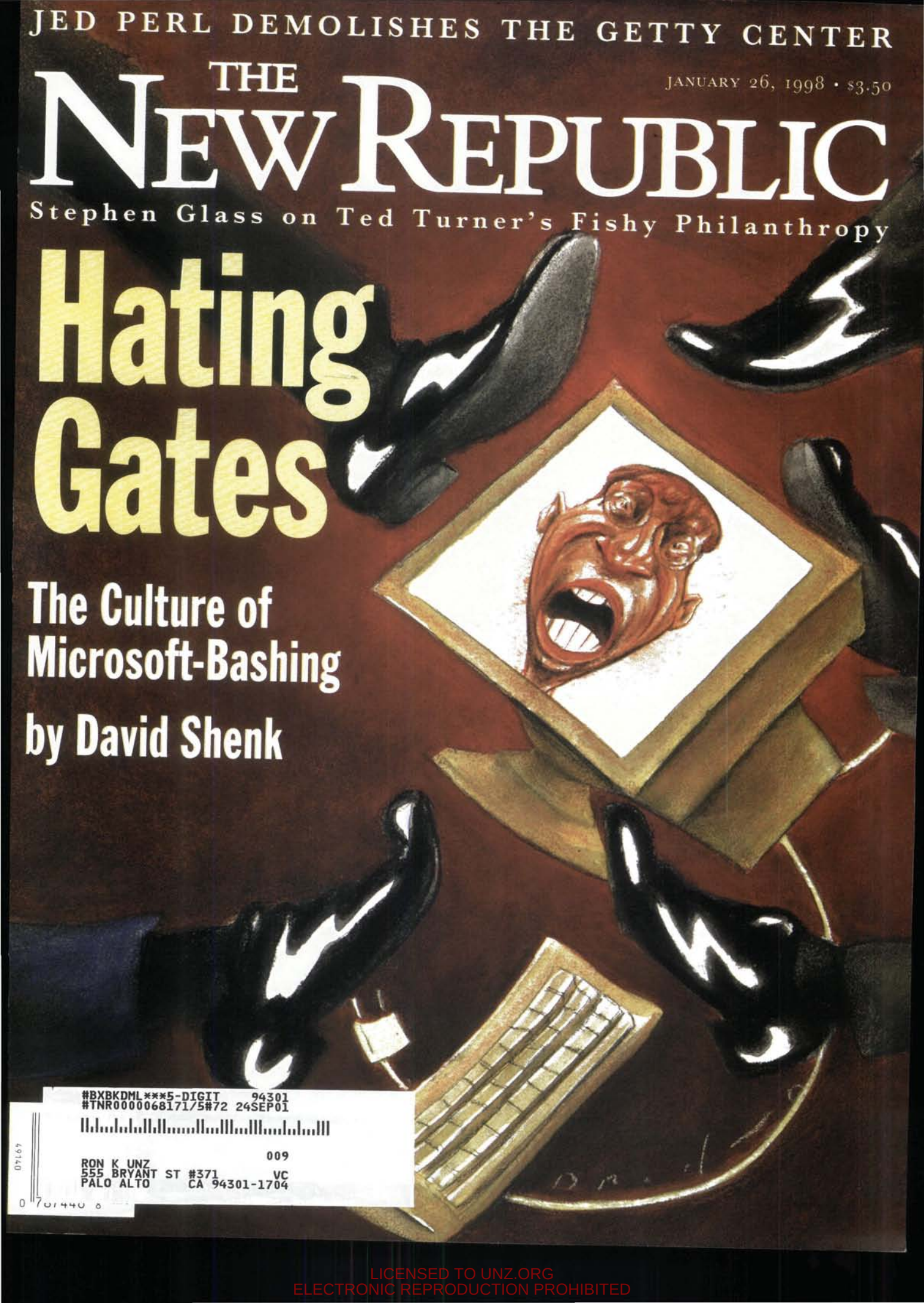

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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JANUARY 26, 1998

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CORRESPONDENCE

Flat figures

To the editors:

In his December 15, 1997, article ("The Flat Tax Scam"), Jonathan Chait offers probably the most substantive criticism of the flat tax that has been written since I first introduced the proposal in June 1994. Nevertheless, he comes up short.

Chait charges that if I were genuinely interested in simplifying the tax system, I wouldn't have "fought the 1986 reform," which simplified the tax code and closed loopholes. In fact, I voted for it.

Relying on a study by Alan Feld, Chait writes that flat taxers "very slyly conflat[e] two ideas—flatness and simplicity—that are, in fact, unrelated." It is certainly true that under the flat tax—or any tax system—there will still be some compliance costs and some gray areas. But THE NEW REPUBLIC is going to be hard-pressed to find a serious tax policy expert who would dispute either that my flat tax would dramatically simplify the tax system or that the single rate is a key reason for the simplicity gains.

Alan Feld, in the same article Chait cites, also writes, "The flat tax would eliminate at least four features of the current income tax system that create statutory or transactional complexity." Most notably, "the *single tax rate* does away with bracket arbitrage, where taxpayers with different marginal rates seek to create or use deductions at high rates and include income at low rates."

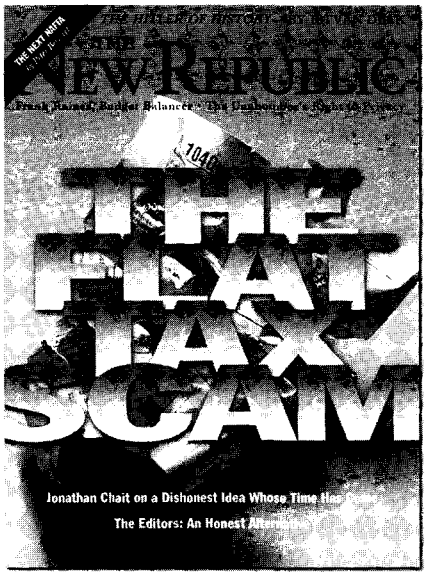
Chait argues that the flat tax increases taxes on the middle class. But he breezes over a critical feature of the flat tax, the generous size of the personal deductions. "But the current system already has standard deductions," he writes. Yes, but under the flat tax, the standard deduction for a family of four is *more than $10,000 higher than the current system.* He further complains that the flat-tax postcard-sized form is designed to misrepresent the true burden of the flat tax, because no taxpayer could possibly factor in all the business taxes passed along in the form of higher prices. True, but that's also the case for today's 1040 form.

Chait belittles the notion that economic growth would increase substantially under a flat tax. In fact, it is liberal critics like Chait who contradict themselves. While claiming that the loss of deductions will result in "wrenching changes," he denies that dramatically lower marginal taxes will have a positive impact on work effort or investment. The flat tax will cause a continuing economic boom that will compensate for the loss of today's deductions.

DICK ARMEY
U.S. Representative
Washington, D.C.

Jonathan Chait replies:

When I asked Armey about the 1986 Tax Reform Act during an interview, he denounced it. And I wasn't hard pressed to find an expert who denies that a single rate, by itself, substantially simplifies taxes, because all experts do. Jane Gravelle of the Congressional Research Service, for one, writes that the current system "is not complicated by a progressive rate structure since one only looks up one number in the tax table." And sure, taxpayers can't calculate business taxes currently; the key difference



is that the flat tax collects a lot *more* from businesses.

To the editors:

Jonathan Chait's article fails to mention that a flat tax already exists. It is called Social Security and Medicare. If one includes employer contributions, the majority of Americans pay more of these flat taxes than progressive income taxes.

TIMOTHY R. PIEH
New London, Minnesota

Deak's discontent

To the editors:

In his review of John Lukacs ("The Führer Furor," December 15, 1997), Istvan Deak is not uncritical. But he is not critical enough. "The German historian Joachim Fest speculated in his massive biography that, had Hitler suddenly died in 1938, he would have been regarded as one of the greatest Germans in history. Lukacs agrees." This is the point at which the reviewer should have gone beyond calling it "strong stuff." Even if Hitler had died before the National Pogrom of November 9–10, he would have been not a "great German," let alone "one of the greatest Germans." He would have been a murderous thug. The first concentration camps had been opened in 1933; professors, orchestra conductors, public servants, as long as they were Jews, had been dismissed. The press, the radio, the book trade, the film industry, had been "coordinated" to become spokesmen for the regime and nothing more; opponents of the regime had been terrorized and a number of them murdered; the Nuremberg Laws had deprived German Jews of their citizenship—the catalogue could be greatly enlarged.

"Lukacs abhors Hitler no less than the rest of us." I doubt it: if he can think of the first five years of Nazi totalitarianism as an argument for Hitler's greatness, that abhorrence suffers from myopia. It would have been a good thing if Deak had said so, loud and clear.

PETER GAY
New Haven, Connecticut

Istvan Deak replies:

In his book, John Lukacs presents Hitler as a modernizer and a revolutionary, similar to Lenin, Stalin, and Mao. As a traditionalist, Lukacs rejects the revolutions these men made. He also rejects Hitler as the very antithesis of what constitutes nobility in the world. Still, Lukacs feels that Hitler should be evaluated objectively. This leads him to say that, at least until 1938, most Germans admired Hitler for his economic, social, and political accomplishments, and, had he died in that year, he would probably have entered German history as one of the greatest Germans. For Lukacs, "great" in this context is not a word of praise. I disagreed with substantial sections of Lukacs's argument. I also indicated that some of his arguments can be easily misunderstood. But I do not doubt that Lukacs abhors the Führer for his crimes. Nor is it necessary to remind the readers of THE NEW REPUBLIC again and again that Hitler was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, monsters of our terrible century.

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Letters may also be sent electronically to: TNR@aol.com

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FROM WASHINGTON

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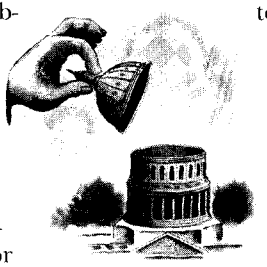
Christmas is over. New Year's has been slept off. Now it's time for the next mid-winter Washington ritual: the Tournament of Policies Parade. Every year, between Congress's return from recess and the President's State of the Union address, the air in the nation's capital thickens with fancy new ideas—puffed up as trial balloons and floated before the press and the public. With the stakes extra high due to the midterm election contest coming up in November, the White House's entrants in this year's pageant are, once again, handsomely packaged remedies for middle-class anxieties: a tax break for child care; a plan to let the "near-elderly" buy into Medicare; and, perhaps, a gesture or two at keeping Social Security solvent. The Clinton administration, noting that the expected budget surplus has not yet materialized, says that all new spending must be paid for by taxes or cuts elsewhere. So far, however, the only hint of middle-class sacrifice from the White House is a plan to raise cigarette taxes by $60 billion over five years.



But as long as we're just floating ideas, why not think really big? There is one policy change that would help bury the deficit for good and solve the looming Social Security crisis. It would also put a dent in global warming, revolutionize automobile technology, perk up life in our inner cities, cut down on traffic jams and aggressive driving, and maybe even improve relations with Europe. It's a 50-cents-per-gallon increase in the federal excise tax on gasoline.

I know, I know. This trial balloon is made of lead—a complete political non-starter. The last time the Clintonites tried something even remotely like it was their ill-fated 1993 plan to tax the energy content of finished goods. But hear me out. If nothing else, it's worth pondering why such a plainly beneficial proposal is so wildly unrealistic.

The first thing to understand about even a fairly hefty increase in the gas tax is that the middle class can afford it. In real terms, gas prices, including state and federal excise taxes, are about half of what they were in March 1981, according to the Congressional Budget Office. CBO notes that a twelve-cents-per-gallon tax increase would raise $13 billion per year. A five-year phase-in of a 50-cents increase would raise $150 billion, after which the government would get $52 billion in extra revenue each year. All this revenue enhancement—significant in terms of the $1.7 trillion federal budget, yet modest compared to the $7 trillion economy—"would not put the total cost of gasoline above what consumers have already experienced in real terms," CBO says.

In effect, the cheapening of gas has subsidized a vast expansion in automobile travel. Is this really good public policy? I enjoy the convenience and freedom of driving as much as the next guy. I detest traffic, air pollution, rutted highways, and unchecked suburban sprawl as much as the next guy, too. The point is that, for all its undeniable benefits, the unconstrained growth of automobile transportation has also imposed costs on all Americans. Economists call these costs "externalities." At the moment, the full cost to society of those externalities is not reflected in the unit cost of gasoline, and therefore is not taken into account by the consumer when he or she is deciding how much to drive.

An increase in the gas tax would end that irrationality. It would create a powerful incentive to reduce driving and to seek alternatives, from bikes to buses. This would reduce the externalities, starting with auto exhaust, a major source of the greenhouse gases that are said to cause global warming. (And even if you don't buy the global-warming threat, the gas tax would also cut down on all the scientifically uncontroversial forms of air pollution from cars.) Congestion on the roads would diminish, and with it the "road rage" phenomenon that has taken so many lives of late. As commuting became more expensive, developers would find it more difficult to sell outlying tract houses and might consider investing in older suburbs or cities instead.

Meanwhile, the federal government could spend the proceeds of the gas tax to offset much of the projected gap between Social Security expenditures and revenues. At no additional cost in

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JANUARY 26, 1998

PAYROLL PAYBACK

Tax cutters of all political stripes have long cloaked the dark art of regressive fiscal irresponsibility in the bright rhetoric of job creation and middle-class relief. And yet, while tax cutting and deficit reduction have dominated the public agenda for two decades, Washington has never quite gotten around to cutting the one tax that hits average people hardest: the payroll tax which funds Social Security.

The Social Security tax—it's called FICA on your paycheck—is more regressive than the income tax in three ways. First, instead of graduated rates, it imposes a flat rate of 6.2 percent on both employees and employers. Economists generally believe that employers pass their share along to workers, either in the form of new jobs not created or in the form of lower wages. Second, it covers only wage income and completely exempts investment income, which goes mostly to the wealthy. In fact, the very wealthy often earn more from their investments than they do from wages. And, third, it applies only to the first $68,400 of an individual's pay. The more you earn beyond that amount, the lower your effective payroll tax rate. Almost 73 percent of American families and 90 percent of the entire workforce pay more in payroll taxes than they do in income taxes. This inequity is compounded by the fact that payroll taxes paid by the working poor fund the benefits of retirees who are, on average, better off.

But now there are signs that reform of the FICA tax may finally be at hand. Two senators—Democrat Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts and Republican John Ashcroft of Missouri, a probable presidential contender—have offered remedies. Ashcroft has proposed making payroll taxes deductible from regular income taxes. This idea is a step in the right direction, but it presents two serious problems. First, he has offered no specific way to recoup the revenue that would be lost under his plan beyond taking advantage of increasing federal revenue generated by growth—a budget surplus that politicians of both parties have already rhetorically spent several times, even though it has not yet materialized. Worse, since Ashcroft's plan uses an income-tax deduction as its method of cutting the payroll tax burden, it is still regressive. Only those who make enough money to owe income taxes can take advantage of a tax deduction. And the higher your bracket is, the more a deduction helps you. Meanwhile, those with low incomes, who pay high payroll taxes but no income taxes, don't get a dime.

Kennedy's idea is better. He suggests removing the cap on wages subject to the Social Security tax, which is the most regressive aspect of the tax. He would then use the extra revenue from taxing higher incomes to lower the payroll tax rate to 5.3 percent each for employees and employers. Kennedy's plan would still exempt investment income. But at least everybody would pay the same effective rate on wages. So not only does Kennedy's plan pay for itself, it is also more progressive than Ashcroft's proposal.

The most sophisticated critique of Kennedy's idea—and there are critics in both parties—is that it could weaken the middle-class political support upon which the stability of Social Security depends. A major source of middle-class discontent with Social Security now is that current taxpayers generally believe they are paying more into the system than they can hope to receive as retirees, and many baby boomers doubt Social Security will even be around at all once they cease working. Kennedy's plan would compound this problem by suddenly raising the FICA taxes of every individual taxpayer with an income above $68,400—not poor, certainly, but not rich, either. This could lead to demands for a hike in Social Security benefits, or a general middle-class backlash against the system, or both. And that would imperil the program, defeating one major purpose of reforming the payroll tax.

The answer to this criticism is, basically, that Social Security is long overdue for an injection of honesty. Back in the New Deal days, the payroll tax was sold to the public as a "contribution" to a trust fund, which would be returned to you, with interest, after age 65. This link hasn't really existed for a long time, for two

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reasons. One reason is that, during the '70s, Congress raised benefits to a level which, for most of today's retirees, far exceeds what was paid in. The second reason is that, in more recent years, the surplus in the trust fund created by rising payroll taxes has been used to finance other government functions. The fiction is that today's payroll taxes will pay for Social Security benefits in the future. The reality is that, right now, the proceeds from payroll taxes are paying for military airplanes, food stamps, and federal courthouses.

Since the 1980s, Republicans have used the populist rhetoric of tax relief to hide what has actually been a tax shift. Progressive income taxes have been cut, while regressive FICA taxes have been raised—and this shift has been a factor in the nagging problem of income inequality. The economy is currently generating prosperity at an amazing rate. Reforming the payroll tax would help it generate a little more fairness, too.•

NOTEBOOK

DOUBLE DUTY: Diversity of opinion, long a hallmark of *The New York Times* op-ed page—and now official policy for the news section, as well. How else to explain the two completely inconsistent accounts of life among United States peacekeeping troops that recently appeared in the paper of record? In a December 21, 1997, story headlined "FOR U.S. TROOPS IN BOSNIA, DREARY LIFE ON THE LINE," *Times*man Chris Hedges depicted sullen soldiers trapped in a pointless mission. "The daily tension, the intractability of the conflict, and the deadening routine in this bleak corner of Bosnia have disillusioned many soldiers," Hedges wrote. But in the paper's January 4 edition, Bosnia was a different place. "UNLIKELY TWIST: G.I.'S WARM TO BOSNIA," chirped the headline of Mike O'Connor's story. "Soldiers get constant reinforcement from Bosnians who tell them it is good that the Americans are here," O'Connor reported from the town of Olovo. "Psychological screenings of soldiers leaving the danger, discomfort and loneliness of long tours in Bosnia find that the troops feel better about themselves and their jobs than the average American does...." Whereas Hedges's troops muttered under their breath about President Clinton's unfitness to be commander-in-chief, O'Connor's soldiers took the President's extension of their mission in stride. Poor Bosnia. It gets chopped into little pieces by war and great-power diplomacy. Then along comes *The New York Times* and splits reality itself right down the middle.

INDISCRETIONARY SPENDING: Much has been made of how the virtual disappearance of the federal budget deficit has transformed American politics. Formerly, it is said, both parties supposedly were obsessed with deficit reduction; now both parties can consider dynamic new policy initiatives. But the depressing truth is that very little has changed at all. The dwindling deficit has simply become an excuse to evade sensible budgeting. For Republicans, the apparent budget surplus offers a reason to cut taxes, which is odd, because they never previously considered the lack of a budget surplus to be a reason *not* to cut taxes. House Speaker Newt Gingrich, for one, proposes that Congress institute a new tax cut every year. This is a particularly naked political ploy. Even if cutting taxes is necessary, is there any conceivable justification for doing it *every year* other than providing the Republicans with an inexhaustible reservoir of reasons to be re-elected? President Clinton has taken the high road, in a way, by proposing to balance the budget next year. This is a smart way to head off Newt's tax-cutting mania, at least in the short run, and to justify new spending initiatives. The problem is how the White House plans to spend new money. The new initiatives are mainly poll-driven ideas, like child-care tax subsidies, designed to appeal to the middle class. Yet the White House has shown little interest in restoring funds to discretionary spending, which is the general pot of money that funds federal functions like scientific research, the FBI, and the Coast Guard. Discretionary spending doesn't have a strong political constituency, because the specific programs it funds are determined year-to-year, and hence Congress can vote to cut it without specifying any particular program to lose funding. So why hasn't Clinton made discretionary spending a priority? Because it's easier for him to take political credit for starting a new program than for merely continuing old ones, even if the old ones are better. And if Clinton points out that discretionary spending has been neglected, it might remind people that he acquiesced in neglecting it in the first place.

SURPLUS OR MINUS:

Survey Shows States Posting Budget Surpluses, Tax Cuts Unlikely

—*The Washington Post*, January 4

EAGER AND FLUSH,
MANY STATES PLAN
YET MORE TAX CUTS

—*The New York Times*, same day

(Thanks to both Paul Kane and Nicholas Schulz of Washington, D.C.)

LOW-FAT LOGIC:

Excess Weight Can Be A Burden on Longevity

—*The Washington Post*, January 1

Study Finds Less Connection Between Fat and Early Death

—*The New York Times*, same day

(Thanks to Leslie Goodman-Malamuth of Washington, D.C.)

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THE HARD QUESTIONS

BAD BOYS

By Ronald Steel

Who ever anointed the Kennedys as America's royal family? By all rights they would seem to have no particular claim to the title. They made their mark in politics—hardly an honor in a country that looks upon politicians with even more disdain than lawyers or journalists. Nor is it that during their time in politics they remade the shape of the country, like Jefferson; or left a lasting mark on its institutions, like Madison and Adams; or exemplified its most noble ideals, like Lincoln or Wilson; or brought it victorious through depression and war, like Roosevelt.

No, we revel in the Kennedys because their lives are a soap opera, and we find them glamorous. And we consider them glamorous not only because they are rich, but quite explicitly because they lead lives of excess—too much money, too much substance abuse, too much adultery, too much self-defeating behavior, too much regret and sorrow. Hardly a year goes by without one Kennedy or another causing a scandal or falling on his face. And since there are so many of them we are now growing accustomed to a parade of funerals.

Of course, those qualities alone would make them just another moderately messed-up family, no better or worse than most. But the Kennedys have links to the pinnacle of American political power. Kennedys, both past and present, have pursued careers in politics, started humanitarian foundations, worked to improve the environment, or, like the careless Michael Kennedy, sought to help the poor. The Kennedys are rich and often dysfunctional, which makes them interesting; numerous, which makes them unavoidable; willful and spoiled, which makes them annoying; and imbued with the belief that it is their duty to make the country better, which persuades us to keep forgiving them. This is why the death of Michael—whose major claim to the media's attention was an ill-advised, amorous dalliance that in any other family would be none of the public's business—has dominated print and broadcast for an entire week.

One question remains, though. What is it that leads a 39-year-old man with the responsibility for three children to play a dangerous variant of touch football while careening down a hill on skis? Probably the same thing that led him to initiate an affair with a 14-year-old babysitter. And perhaps also the same thing that led his own father, Bobby Kennedy, to scale the highest peak on this continent despite a total lack of experience, to swim in piranha-infested waters on a dangerous hunting trip, and to conduct an emotion-filled campaign for the presidency with what today seems like astonishingly little regard for his own personal security.

Recklessness is not exactly something new for the Kennedys: John Kennedy compromised his presidency, to say nothing of his marriage, by his neurotic pursuit of sexual conquests. The tradition, introduced by the robber-baron founding father, Joseph Kennedy, apparently endures among the current generation of nephews. But the line between romance and recklessness is a narrow one, and there is, quite clearly, something romantic about the Kennedys. Part of it is a willingness to defy the fates and live for the moment. This raises them out of the humdrum world in which the rest of us live and transforms what otherwise might seem to be folly into courage. In Michael, his brother Joe eulogized, "the gale of life blew high."

The other part of the Kennedys' approach to life is what can only be called their sense of entitlement. Among them, or at least among many of the men, is the conviction that the rules restraining others don't really apply. This third generation—and here we are talking primarily about the eleven children of Bobby Kennedy—pushes the limits of the permissible. Some of them have fights in public places, get busted for drug use, and cheat flagrantly on their wives.

They are, in other words, "bad boys." Not, of course, in the same way youths in the underclass are bad: they are not threatening to others, and only sometimes are obnoxious. Rather, they are like young lords of the manor, about whom the townspeople cluck and gossip, but whom they ultimately forgive. Since redemption enhances those who bestow it, sin is always forgiven—indeed transgression is secretly cherished. It is what draws us closer to our social and political betters; it makes us feel that they are just like us. No lord, after all, is unblemished in the eyes of his valet. Just as Judith Exner has not noticeably diminished the cult that worships the image of John Kennedy, neither has Paula Jones seemed to hurt Bill Clinton's approval ratings. What we find intolerable are those who lust only in their hearts, like Jimmy Carter in his virtuous cardigan sweater.

Republics are, in the end, rather dull places symbolically. Every public needs its royals. Pity the poor French, who have been grieving for two centuries over the loss of theirs. So desperate are they for the crowned heads they severed that they virtually adopted the pandering Duke and Duchess of Windsor as their very own. Even minor and would-be Romanovs are returning to Russia to the delight of a public seeking the solace of excess and pageantry.

Although our Founding Fathers told us we did not need a king, they failed to provide a substitute. But a king is not enough. Nor is a movie star. They get old

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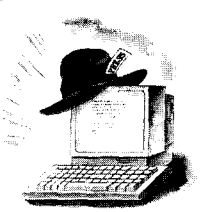
and disappear. What we have always needed is a dynasty: a family that rolls on generation after generation, elaborating the public weal, dabbling in good works, and periodically wreaking havoc on their private lives. The Kennedys may not be perfect for the role, and the successor generation is still deep in the shadows of its fathers. But they mean well, and when they can keep themselves focused, their hearts are in the right place. So go in peace, Michael Kennedy. You have become one of us, just as we, thanks to the incessant drumming of a news-hungry media, have persuaded ourselves that we are part of you.•

JERUSALEM DISPATCH

BIBI KING

By Gershom Gorenberg

Rarely has Israel's prime minister looked so much like a punching bag. To get his budget through parliament, Benjamin Netanyahu allocated hundreds of millions of dollars to the pet causes of parties in his coalition. Then, just hours before the scheduled vote, Foreign Minister David Levy resigned and took his Gesher (Bridge) Party out of the government. Waving a six-month-old letter from Netanyahu promising him more money for social benefits dear to Levy's mostly lower-income Sephardic constituents, Levy roared, "Signatures have no value, commitments no meaning." That move left the prime minister's crumbling coalition with a 61-59 majority in the Knesset. And that's before it decides on the extent of a promised West Bank pullback. Israelis are betting that they'll have to go to the polls again later this year.



Real disputes over the budget and negotiations with the Palestinians explain much of the developing political deadlock in Jerusalem. But the crisis is also the ironic result of reforms that made Netanyahu the first prime minister elected through a direct, popular vote. Indeed, the 1996 election that brought the Likud leader to power was supposed to mark the birth of an Israeli second republic—one giving the chief executive a personal mandate to make tough decisions without constant backroom bargaining. In fact, the changes elevated a man lacking experience, negotiating ability, and even his own party's loyalty—weaknesses the flaws of the new electoral system have compounded. An attempt to get around the wrangling of representative government has yielded a wounded democracy.

Israel's first republic was purely parliamentary, with the 120 Knesset members chosen through a proportional vote. In a country divided by Orthodox and secular, hawks and doves—a country so politicized that even the pro soccer teams are linked to parties—the system guaranteed every ideological camp representation. It also ensured that every government rested on a coalition. Rather than fighting in the streets, communities with radically different visions shouted at one another in the parliament. To form a government, every prime minister had to trade away pieces of his own platform. Most often, that meant striking deals with clerical parties. During the '80s, the country was so evenly split that the two largest parties, the hawkish Likud and dovish Labor, were forced into sharing power in push-me-pull-you governments whose stands on trading territory for peace were ones of ambivalence and angst.

In response, a group of law professors, all then at Tel Aviv University, proposed constitutional reforms, with direct election of the prime minister as a central plank. The prime minister, argues Professor Uriel Reichman, chairman of the Constitution for Israel group, lacked authority and legitimacy. "In a divided society, you needed an anchor of stability," he says. The subtext of that argument, as political scientist Yaron Ezrahi points out, was a belief in technical fixes for political division—and a longing for a strong leader.

To help fund its public campaign, Constitution for Israel raised money from American Jews. Reichman says the selling point was "the desire to turn this country into a constitutional democracy." Arye Carmon, president of the Israel Democracy Institute and an opponent of the reform, gives it a different emphasis: "They told American Jews, 'If you want to overcome the Orthodox in Israel, give us money.'" Certainly, many secular Israelis had the same hope: candidates for prime minister would no longer need to bid for religious parties' support. In effect, the reform was a way to reduce the influence of Orthodox voters—gerrymandering by other means. It turned out to do just the opposite.

In the run-up to the 1992 Knesset vote, two key advocates of electoral reform were Netanyahu and the late Yitzhak Rabin. Netanyahu, then a deputy minister, apparently hoped to become Likud leader by selling his telegenic appeal as the ticket to victory in a direct-election system; the gambit would prove successful. Rabin believed he was more popular than his party and would benefit from a stress on personality. Much of Labor agreed. "I didn't think it was a good law, but I thought it was good for Yitzhak Rabin," admits Ephraim Sneh, a top Laborite. When the Knesset approved the reform, Labor ordered its legislators to vote as a bloc in favor of it—and then lived to regret it. When the time came to test the change in 1996, Rabin was gone.

While the made-in-the-USA aura of direct election helped sell the change, any resemblance to the American system is as counterfeit as a Chinese Swiss watch. Israel's second republic lacks both separation of powers and federalism. Voters cast one ballot for a party in the

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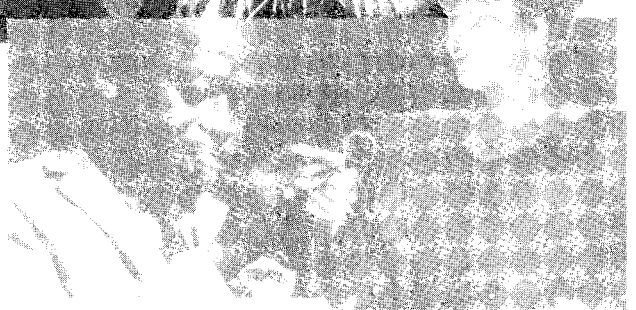

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Knesset and one for prime minister, but the winning candidate still needs a parliamentary vote of confidence in his government. The Knesset can call new elections for the prime minister, but unless it does so with a two-thirds majority, it ends its own term as well.

By the time ballots were counted in 1996, the flaws were already evident. To keep Levy and a right-wing candidate out of the race, Netanyahu signed deals giving their parties a third of the spots on the Likud Knesset ticket. Likud parliamentary candidates felt betrayed. It was an early indication of the built-in conflict between the candidate and the party—and of Netanyahu's frequent weakness in negotiations. Rather than ignoring the religious vote, both Netanyahu and Labor's Shimon Peres desperately courted Orthodox leaders.

Able to split their ballots, many voters picked either Peres or Netanyahu for Prime Minister, then chose clerical or ethnic tickets for the Knesset. Orthodox parties won 23 seats—their strongest showing ever. Netanyahu needed eight parties to form a government, and his own Likud made up only a third of the coalition Knesset members—fewer than any previous ruling party. That's why he initially agreed to meet Orthodox demands to ban Reform and Conservative conversions to Judaism in Israel, infuriating most American Jews.

Worse, Netanyahu is at war with his own party. Because Netanyahu is directly elected, the party's Knesset delegation is no longer his source of power and legitimacy. In effect, the Likud is just one member of his coalition. As one politician says, "Bibi has contempt for his ministers." The feeling is mutual. But the Likud doesn't have the usual parliamentary option of replacing the prime minister in midterm, as Britain's Conservatives did with Margaret Thatcher. The parliament and the prime minister are locked into mutually assured destruction; to dump the chief executive, Knesset members have to end their own terms. The result is constant brinkmanship. With Levy out, it will take very little to go over the edge, especially when Netanyahu depends both on rightists who oppose a pullback and centrists determined to continue the peace process.

Then there's the credibility gap. A year and a half after Netanyahu's election, his own stand on peace and territories remains a cipher. The old Likud, veteran politicians say, needed a clear enough stand to set itself apart from other parties. To attract both centrists and rightists, Netanyahu has blurred his message. The change in election laws didn't eliminate Israel's uncertainty about the price of peace, Ezrahi notes, but now "the ambivalence is reflected in one person"—the prime minister.

Labor is showing some of the same strains while in the opposition. For electoral appeal, it chose ex-General Ehud Barak as its new leader. Already, Barak is taking heat for ignoring the party and moving too far to the center. At a December meeting of Labor's parliamentary delegation, Barak's own allies bitterly attacked him. Knesset member Hagai Merom berated him: "You've got no sincerity, no credibility."

In large part, the flaws in Israel's second republic are a matter of bad design. But the key problem goes deeper, and carries with it a lesson that goes beyond Israel. Reform's proponents voiced an all-too-common feeling that politics is sullied by making deals and splitting differences. They wanted to eliminate this unpretty reality—to "do away with extortion," as Netanyahu once wrote. Instead, they got a system that amplified conflicts. They wanted clear leadership. What they got was the shimmering image of Bibi Netanyahu.

GERSHOM GORENBERG is the op-ed editor of *The Jerusalem Report.*

Sic transit Gloria Allred.

MELROSE CASE

By Ruth Shalit

On December 20, in a fit of Yuletide benevolence, a Los Angeles jury awarded $5 million in compensatory damages to Hunter Tylo, the chestnut-haired actress whose pregnancy got her fired from a guest role on "Melrose Place." "[This] wasn't a victory for me," an ecstatic Tylo told reporters on December 22. "And I mean this with all my heart—it's for every woman." Following a press conference, Tylo hit the talk-show circuit, denouncing Hollywood sexism and demanding justice for her subjugated gender. "For us to be treated like we're pieces of meat—it has to stop," intoned the victorious plaintiff.

Basking deservedly in Tylo's limelight was her lawyer, Gloria Allred, who quickly pronounced the verdict a landmark in the history of women's rights. Employers "are going to have to learn from this case," Allred told CNN, and added, "Hunter Tylo is a Susan B. Anthony." Appearing on the "Today" show, the giddy Allred went even further. Tylo "is absolutely a living Susan B. Anthony and a Rosa Parks all rolled into one," she crowed to NBC's Katie Couric. "Because she's done this not only for herself, but for other women."

For Allred, the Tylo verdict was the lucrative finale to a banner year of celebrity litigation. There was Malibu model Kelly Fisher, who was left stranded on one yacht while her fiance, Dodi Fayed, frolicked with Princess Diana on another. There was Patricia Maston, the Hyatt hotel manager who allegedly fended off a sex attack from Marv Albert by yanking off his toupee. At Allred's urging, Fisher soothed her sorrow with a civil suit; now Maston says she's contemplating the same. "I had repressed so much," Maston told me. "Gloria helped me express my anger and rage."

Allred, for her part, says she couldn't be prouder.

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"Men who inflict injustice on women, they better get ready for a lawsuit," she declares. "Justice can be very empowering." Other Allred clients seeking empowerment, and fistfuls of cash, from their errant paramours include battered Charlie Sheen girlfriend Brittany Ashland and Pietra Thornton, estranged wife of Billy Bob. But Allred has also taken up arms on behalf of smaller fish. There's young Vicki Ann Guest, who contends she was denied a spot on her high school cheerleading squad because her breasts were too big. There's Katrina Yeaw, a 13-year-old Girl Scout who wishes to join the Boy Scouts. On the family's behalf, Allred has now sued that organization, on the grounds that it practices "gender apartheid."

Allred has also embraced uncritically the questionable cult of recovered memory, filing a flurry of lawsuits on behalf of women who claim to have exhumed, often through hypnosis or sodium pentathol, long-repressed memories of parental sexual abuse. Asked for her view of the litany of recent studies attributing such memories to the power of therapeutic suggestion, Allred swats it all aside as a "terrible, terrible backlash" against "survivors."

It's this blithe self-assurance that has endeared Allred to the talk-show circuit, where she reigns as the glamorous public face of American feminism. Invariably described as a "famed and fiery feminist attorney" (Geraldo Rivera), or as a "champion of women's rights" (CNN), the helmet-haired attorney now surfaces on television almost daily. Raves Christopher Hitchens in an August 14 *Evening Standard* article headlined "GET ME GLORIA": "The women's cause has been needing a serious poster girl for some time ... and in this feisty and relentless attorney, may well have found it."

But this prospect rightly annoys some mainstream feminist lawyers, who believe that Allred's careless escalation of rhetoric has done little to further the cause of equality before the law. "It drives me up the wall," says Nadine Strossen, president of the American Civil Liberties Union. "Her tendency to stigmatize men on the basis of a mere accusation, her constant representation of women as victims—she diminishes the kind of work she's done in the past and hurts legitimate feminism."

The irony is that Allred is no gadfly provocateur, but a veteran women's rights activist who has been working to advance the cause of equality between the sexes for well over 30 years. The difference is that, once upon a time, Allred deployed her lawsuits, and her telegenic displays of outrage, on behalf of real injustice.

It was Gloria Allred who in 1980 sued the Los Angeles County sheriff over a jail policy requiring pregnant female inmates to be chained to their beds while they were giving birth. Allred won a consent decree permanently ending the medieval practice. It was Allred who, in 1981, appealed a district judge's ruling in *Fernandez* v. *Wynn Oil* that an oil company could deny a woman a job as director of international operations if it could show that Latin American customers did not want to do business with women. The California Supreme Court, in a precedent-setting ruling, sided with Allred, effectively ending a longstanding "cultural difference" exception in matters of sex discrimination.

And it was Allred who, in 1986, won a $5 million civil verdict on behalf of Lori Brown Nelsen, a recent college graduate who accused a man named Gary Wayne Brown of raping her. The jury's resounding verdict for Nelsen led to a media canonization of Allred, culminating in an NBC movie, *Without Her Consent*, in which Allred was played by "Cheers" siren Bebe Neuwirth. In a glowing profile, *Time* dubbed her "one of the nation's most effective advocates ... of feminist causes."

Today, Allred's commitment to feminist causes is not in question. Nor is the commendable energy and single-mindedness with which she pursues even her most half-baked projects. But somewhere along the line, her justifiable outrage at how badly women are treated in the workplace gave way to a fit of pique over how badly they are treated on yachts. As the distinction between style and substance blurred, her modern vision of equity feminism—fair treatment, no discrimination—gave way to a postmodern vision of celebrity feminism, where Rosa Parks and a soap starlet can receive equal billing as tribunes of civil rights.

During the five-week trial, Spelling's lawyers adamantly defended their decision to deny a pregnant Tylo the chance to play the pneumatic trollop "Taylor McBride." First, they said, there was the matter of Tylo's contract, which included a clause forbidding any "material change" in the actress's appearance. (Allred maintains the clause was legally unenforceable, since it would have deprived Tylo of her civil rights.) Fox executives also pointed out that Tylo's 47-pound weight gain would have wreaked havoc on the show's shooting schedule; during one pivotal scene, in which the unbridled McBride is seen cavorting poolside in a thong bikini, Tylo would have been well into her third trimester.

Yes, the producers conceded, they had accommodated Heather Locklear's pregnancy, concealing her expanding girth with "a picnic basket, tabletops, and a waiter," as Locklear testified at trial. But Locklear is an established star who has anchored the show for four years; "Taylor McBride," the producers argued, was a new character—suitable for any one of a dozen interchangeable ectomorphs. And there was a final difficulty. Tylo, a born-again Christian, had expressed reluctance to assume the persona of a "vixen, adulteress, seductress." This on a show where Alison, the show's designated good girl, is frequently on the receiving end of such put-downs as "First you seduce my father. Then you kill him. Two weeks later, you're after my husband."

Allred disputes the imputation that Tylo, now playing a sexy psychologist on CBS's "The Bold and the Beautiful," is an unlikely tribune of feminist indignation. Tylo's lawsuit, she insists, was "about the subordination of women, the second-class treatment of women.... There's no point in having rights if they can't be asserted." Allred herself claims continuity with the likes of Amelia Earhart and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, whose

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portraits adorn the walls of her Beverly Hills office. "Just look at the history of the women's rights movement," she says. "It took from Seneca Falls to 1920 just to win the right to vote. And so when a Hunter Tylo shows the courage to come forward—to stand up for women's rights—we all should be extremely supportive."

Not everyone agrees, of course. After Allred's invocation of Susan B. Anthony and Rosa Parks was publicized, editorialists at numerous papers, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Los Angeles Times* felt compelled to distance themselves from Allred's inflated language and, indeed, from the substantive conclusions of the verdict itself. I asked Allred if, in retrospect, she didn't regret her controversial comparison. No way. "All those people on the left and on the right who are out there doing the critiquing—they have the luxury of just sitting back and doing nothing," says Allred. "Meanwhile, there are women out there who need to have their rights vindicated. And that's what we do. We don't just *talk* about affording women greater rights. We get out there and do something about it." And with that, Gloria Allred said she had to go. "Hunter will be here any minute," she says. "There's an 'Extra' camera crew waiting in our conference room." •

NEW YORK POSTCARD

QUEENS DRAMA

By David Samuels

Of all the kings and queens in recorded history—heroic, vicious, or obscure—perhaps none has ever led so plainly inoffensive a life as Queen Catherine of Braganza, a Portuguese princess born in a small village outside Lisbon in 1638. Married off at the age of 24 to King Charles II of England, she was scorned in the British court for her dark-olive complexion, pious manner, and sober dress. "Her most famous public moment," says Anthony Grafton, Mellon Professor of the Humanities at Princeton, "came when she was introduced to one of Charles's mistresses at court, at which point she began bleeding profusely from her nose and then passed out." She is, in short, the kind of queen of whom only a handful of scholars might be aware—if not for the fact that she is also the namesake for the borough of Queens in New York City. And it is thanks to this distinction that Queen Catherine has become the catalyst for the latest—and possibly the oddest—installment in one of the city's favorite dramas, the symbolic acting-out of the politics of class and race.

It seems that Ed Koch, back when he was mayor, told the then-mayor of Lisbon that Catherine was the namesake for Queens. Lisbon's mayor passed the word to Manuel Andrade e Sousa, a young Portuguese living in New York, who proposed a statue in Catherine's honor on the shores of Hunter's Point, within hailing distance of the Statue of Liberty. Supporters of the statue, which was to be paid for by the Portuguese government and by private donations, have included Queens Borough President Claire Shulman, Mayors Koch and Rudy Giuliani, Senators Pat Moynihan and Alfonse D'Amato, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, Donald Trump, Mayor Sharpe James of Newark, and the United Nations ambassadors from Angola, Cape Verde, and Mozambique. Mayor David Dinkins praised sculptor Audrey Flack's design for the monument, noting that "when the Borough of Queens was named after this Princess of Portugal and Queen of England in 1683, a lasting bond was forged with the Portuguese that has added color to the gorgeous mosaic of our city."

To its multiracial cast of supporters, a statue of Queen Catherine was, at worst, an inoffensive piece of civic boosterism. However, on July 13, a cartoon by David Gantz appeared in *Newsday* alerting readers to the "little known fact" that "the source of this Queen's wealth, like other European powers of the seventeenth century, was from the slave trade." Enter the Reverend Al Sharpton. In August, he led two dozen demonstrators in a protest against the statue at Queens Borough Hall. Shulman, an early supporter of the statue, became the target of leaflets claiming, "Borough President Claire Shulman defiles the memory of the millions of Africans who died during the 17th century slave trade" and exhorting voters to "Stop Claire Shulman's Glorification of Slavery!"

Presiding over an evening peacemaking session in late December, Shulman looks less like a fan of Queen Catherine than like an ordinary New York politician, watching the ghosts of racial incidents past flit through her conference room in Queens Borough Hall. In her clean-washed white sweater and frozen tuft of white hair, she is the spitting image of a nice Jewish grandmother from Co-op City: in another life, she might have worked behind the counter in a bakery, tying boxes of rugelach together with red and white string.

The Friends of Queen Catherine, including Sousa and Flack, are sitting on one side of a long wooden conference table. The Queen Catherine they wish to honor is a historical figure whose meaning today is defined by the sculptor's intent: "to bring people together." They are mostly white—a mix of solemn Portuguese Americans and liberal Upper West Side professionals in their Saturday afternoon bohemian with-the-people best, their eyes wandering from the angry faces across the table to the schoolchildren's mural above Claire Shulman's head. They wonder, whose side is Claire on? (And exactly what kind of paint do they use to get the same peculiar peeling effect on the walls of every single municipal building in the city?)

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Sitting across from them are the Friends Against Queen Catherine, including the Reverend Charles Norris; State Senator Alton Waldon; Betty Dopson of the Committee to Eliminate Media Offensive to African People (CEMOTAP); and Professor Jeffrey Kroessler, who teaches history at Long Island University. To them, Queen Catherine, daughter of Portugal (a slave-trading nation) and wife of the King of England (also a slave-trading nation), symbolizes slavery.

Also present this evening is Frank Melton, Ph.D., a pale, slight academic in scholarly turtleneck and tweed, who can tell you what Queen Catherine ate for breakfast on any given day of her life. Melton is key to this proceeding, or so the Friends of Queen Catherine hope. He has prepared a presentation based on original sources and historical facts, including the fact that Catherine never owned slaves, that she left money in her will to free slaves belonging to others, and that the sources of her personal wealth, as it turns out, had nothing to do with the slave trade at all. The professor is proud of his knowledge. How extraordinary this is! So many people so interested in Queen Catherine of Braganza!

The Friends Against Queen Catherine have other ideas.

"This is an insult!"

"Uh-huh!"

"You tell them, sisters!"

"If he reads the will, we're going to walk out!"

This is clearly not Shulman's sort of fight. And if she doesn't treat the Friends Against Queen Catherine with the respect they deserve, well, who knows—given the kind of passions that a sensitive racial issue like a statue of a dead queen from Portugal might arouse—she could wind up with another Crown Heights riot on her hands. Her decision is a no-brainer. The professor will not be allowed to speak.

As the winter sun sets over the Upper West Side, accusations of racism and insensitivity to the horrors of slavery seem light-years away. There are no racists on the Upper West Side—only good liberals, supporters of treatment centers for addicts and shelters for the homeless, standing in front of Zabar's, where they have the most wonderful cheeses and smoked salmon and pickled herring swimming in cream. Delicious! And not the least bit pretentious or fussy. It's like Orchard Street, the ur-memory of market day for the immigrant mommies and daddies of a generation or two ago, but with the additional, almost unspeakable pleasure of watching, out of the corner of one seismographically sensitive Manhattanite eye, Nora Ephron or Joan Didion or Mia Farrow loading up their baskets like any other urban housefrau. How could anyone who lives here be accused of being a racist?

So imagine yourself as Audrey Flack passing Zabar's in the late afternoon, or sitting at a dinner party in the home of a friend, one of those rich person's apartments with severe modernist windows overlooking Central Park and the lights of Fifth Avenue, where all the truly awful rich people live, having a wonderful time, and then the voices start in again, from the pamphlets and petitions circulating somewhere out there in Queens.

"...the STENCH of the HOLDS..."

"...depraved arrogance and wickedness..."

Not to sound dismissive or anything, but what planet do these people come from? Flack is a well-known artist who studied with Josef Albers at Yale—a nice, liberal West Sider. During the '70s, she turned to civic sculpture, returning to the neo-Baroque tradition exemplified by Alexander Sterling Calder (the famous Calder's grandfather) and other nineteenth century artists whose work had been nearly erased from the historical record as provincial embarrassments in the rush towards modernism. Audrey's most famous such work is the American Athena, cast in bronze with a nicely modeled midriff and a bald eagle perched on her head.

Unlike Athena, however, Queen Catherine is an actual historical figure who was alive when the African slave trade began. "If someone erected a statue of Eva Braun," Betty Dopson of CEMOTAP has said, "and I don't think she rushed anyone into the ovens or anything, you could make the same argument about her." While Dopson's fondness for the Eva Braun analogy can be somewhat off-putting, it must also be granted that she really does say some extraordinary stuff to the press. "The small globe in her hand," Dopson recently told *The Amsterdam News*, "represents the head of a slave for those whose ancestors were shipped to America in chains."

If there is something touching about Flack's faith in the rightness of her position, then there is also something a bit deaf. Catherine of Braganza was, by any reasonable historical standard, a decent person. Yet, as the statue's opponents are the first to admit, the controversy surrounding her is not about historical facts, or about the artistic merits of Flack's statue. There are people in Queens who are angry about drugs and the economy. They feel ignored. And if a protest over a statue of Queen Catherine is what it takes to get noticed by Claire Shulman and the television crews, then there will be a protest. It is a costume drama, whose central character may belong to the past, but whose angry gestures and emotional inflections clearly belong to the present.

Meanwhile, the 35-foot-tall statue of Queen Catherine stands on the concrete floor of the Tallix foundry in Beacon, New York, with her wide eyes, full lips—it's hard to say what race she is exactly—and a wondering little smile. And this afternoon, at least, in her light-filled studio on Riverside Drive, Flack still thinks her statue will go up as planned this year. "I hope I don't sound like I'm nuts," she says, modeling the statue's oval face in the air with delicate fingers, "but I feel so strongly that this face was given to me. This face is for all of us. Look how beautiful and full her lips are, and look at the hair, so abstract, the weight of each curl, so perfectly balanced. See how the bridge of her nose pushes in like this so deeply just below her forehead. I think that truths emerge at times in history, and they emerge through artists," she adds. "And this was just something that had to come out."

DAVID SAMUELS is a contributing editor at *Harper's*.

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Ted Turner's fishy philanthropy.

GIFT OF THE MAGNATE

By Stephen Glass

Ted Turner boasts he has watched *Citizen Kane* more than 100 times. And, as he has told numerous friends, he sees parallels between his life and that of the title character. Kane had his newspaper chain. Turner has CNN. Kane never got over his obsession with a sled. Turner has never relinquished his boyhood passion for sailboats. Kane sought public office. Turner has sought public approval.

Privately, though, Turner has confessed that the movie—the rights to which he has purchased—frightens him: "He thought he was Kane, a guy who has everything and ends up with nothing," Turner's son Teddy told a biographer. "A while back he realized the world was in trouble, but that he was also in trouble." Turner doesn't want to die rich and powerful—and lonely and reviled. This is why, his friends say, he has given lavishly to a host of pet international causes, from environmentalism to population control. And it is also why, many suspect, he is now giving $1 billion to the United Nations.

If it is indeed approval Turner seeks, then he seems to have found it. "Ted's Excellent Donation," proclaimed *USA Today*. *Newsweek* put him on the cover and called him "the world's leading sister of charity." And why not? If not the greatest act of charity ever, the billion-dollar benefaction, apparently made up of Time Warner stock, hikes the bar for standards of modern philanthropy. What's more, the donation will finance all kinds of worthy causes: inoculations for Third World kids, relocation for refugees, and the reconstruction of hurricane-devastated villages. None of the money, Turner has promised, will be used to cover U.N. administrative costs or make good on unpaid U.S. dues to the organization. "It's a billion-dollar day at the United Nations," crowed U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan's spokesman. "The moral boost it gives to the organization exceeds the financial value of Ted Turner's gift."

But a thirst for power and control always lurked behind Citizen Kane's exploits, and, in a much subtler sense, similar motivations explain Turner's donation. He has often privately called himself a "world ambassador" above—and, one senses, better than—politics. He leverages his media empire to gain access to world leaders, then uses that access to realize his eclectic international aspirations, often while doing very well for himself along the way. Giving his assets to the United Nations betrays a similar agenda—not necessarily a sinister one, to be sure, but not a wholly selfless one, either.

None of which would particularly matter if the object of Turner's favor were just another private charity. But that is not the case. The United Nations is a representative organization of nations charged with maintaining world peace, and its fragile authority rests entirely on the sovereignty willingly ceded by member nations who pay dues. The more the U.N. relies on private interests to bankroll its operations, the more it becomes a club for wealthy individuals, which is particularly scary once you consider that not every wealthy donor's agenda will seem as benign as Turner's does.

Article 17 of the United Nations Charter reads: "The expenses of the Organization shall be borne by the Members as apportioned by the General Assembly." In other words, the 185 states that make up the world body are expected to finance the U.N.'s budget. While the article does not explicitly forbid other sources of income, historians say that the U.N.'s founders were in fact intent on preventing just that possibility. They realized that the more money private individuals contributed to the U.N., the more control they would exercise over the organization's policies. And, while the geopolitical objectives of nations are often elusive, they are much more transparent than the intentions of wealthy individuals. Excluding funding from all private corporations and individuals, no matter how nobly civic-minded, is the firewall that protects the U.N. from manipulation.

At least once in U.N. history, members have considered knocking down that barrier—and they rejected the idea out of hand. In 1958, Great Britain informally floated a proposal to liberalize Article 17's language and permit the U.N. to raise capital from philanthropic businesses. But Britain dropped the suggestion almost immediately when many members, particularly developing countries, said they feared the U.N. would become the tool of multinational corporations. "With money inherently comes ties," explains historian Rachel Thourt of the United Nations Research Group. "The smaller nations asked a good question: if the U.N.

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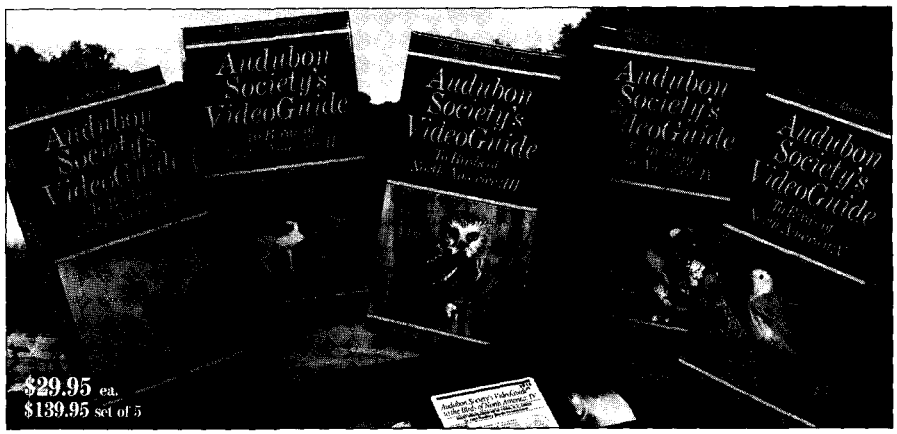

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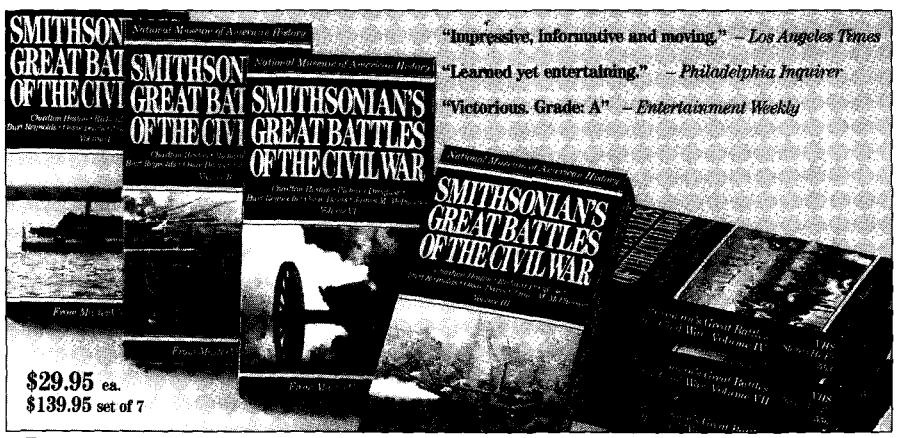
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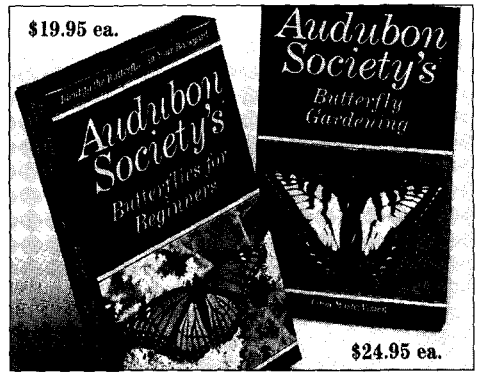

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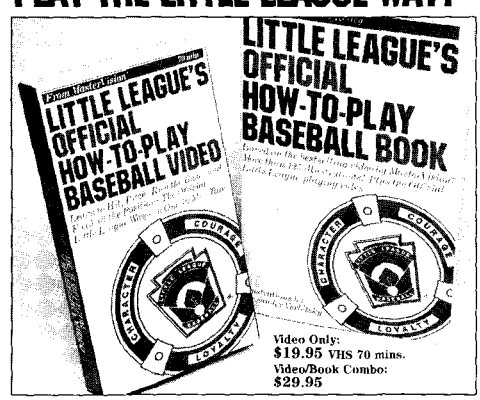

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takes money from oil companies year after year, it will grow dependent on it. Even if Standard Oil says there are no conditions, won't we have some desire to keep them happy? Then, won't it be harder to sort out things in the Middle East?"

At the very least, Turner's gift promises to create accountability problems. Although Turner has not made public all of the details of his donation, he has said he plans to give ten annual gifts worth $100 million each to a newly formed foundation. That foundation, under the direction of former Senator and State Department official Tim Wirth, would then solicit proposals from the U.N.'s humanitarian agencies, like the High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF. The Foundation's board would then in turn approve or reject the agencies' proposals.

It's not hard to imagine how this scheme might go awry—even with the best of intentions. Consider, for example, what kind of complications the Rwandan refugee crisis could have created. Turner, to his credit, has been concerned with the plight of refugees for years. Friends say that months before the Rwandan crisis dominated the headlines, he called for U.N. intervention and the establishment of refugee camps. That type of humanitarian assistance is the kind of aid Turner says he now will fund. Now assume Turner—not the member states—had paid for those refugee camps. What are the U.N. members to do when the Hutus use the camps as a base to attack Tutsis in Zaire? "I only hope that never happens. That would be a mess on a large scale," says one member of the U.S. mission to the U.N. "I guess if we had problems with the camps, we would call the High Commissioner for Refugees. They would then probably tell us that we're not paying for it, I guess, and we—by that I mean any of the states, not just the U.S.—would have a lot of trouble managing the situation. We could vote, but if it's not our money it's nearly impossible to really control it."

TED TURNER BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

What makes this concern all the more pressing is the likelihood that because Turner's grants are meted out annually, U.N. agencies will try to court favor with him to keep the money flowing. And that, presumably, would mean tailoring U.N. programs to advance Turner's goals. Advocates of the donation, both at the U.N. and elsewhere, dismiss such worries, arguing that Turner won't really be that closely involved with decision-making on grants. But that has never been Turner's style. During the '80s, he was very hands-on about the activities of his now-defunct Better World Society; with the slogan "harnessing the power of television to make a better world," the society spent over half of its budget funding more than 40 documentaries on such fashionable concerns as the environment and population control.

Friends expect Turner will be just as involved in this new foundation: when it comes to the front office, he is as famously hands-on as Kane was in the newsroom. It's not hard to imagine Turner using his U.N. money to encourage more programs that dovetail with his own preoccupations—whether it be global warming or using television to promote peace. And if he succeeds—if, in fact, his donations have some defining effect on U.N. policy—it's a safe bet other plutocrats will follow. Turner has promised as much, saying he's going to push the world's wealthiest to supplement his gift. "I'm going to be a big fundraiser for the U.N. I'm putting every rich person in the world on notice," he told Larry King. "They're going to be hearing from me about giving more money away."

One very rich person may already be mulling over such possibilities. Sources close to George Soros have told the British media that the billionaire, who has already spent vast sums developing Eastern Europe, is considering a Turner-like donation to fund the U.N.'s anti-drug efforts. Such a contribution would almost certainly come with major policy strings attached. Soros is

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a well-known advocate of relaxing drug prohibitions and has financed needle-exchange programs in the past. "Soros's ilk have failed to convince most poor countries to try out their needle-exchange programs," says Dot Pugh of World Drug Watch. "But you think some impoverished African nation is going to risk losing other U.N. money by banning this program?... Turner's gift has opened the door to the grand pro-drug world experiment."

At least Soros and Turner have well-known—and, in the minds of many, innocuous—agendas. If contributions start to pour in from foreign foundations bankrolled by plutocrats from countries with lax disclosure requirements, there would be virtually no way for member states to track who was actually paying for U.N. programs. "Look at the trouble the international community all had tracking the money that went through BCCI," explained a former member of the Japanese mission to the U.N., referring to the banking empire that was closed down in 1991 after being linked to the brokering of arms deals and the financing of terrorism. "That's the kind of operation that might quietly want to build influence in the United Nations by pumping money through its humanitarian programs."

Turner's supporters insist there is a precedent for private funding of the U.N.: a foundation the U.N. set up in 1995 to accept donations from Americans. That foundation, however, was established only for the U.N.'s fiftieth anniversary festivities—an apolitical mission tangential to the U.N.'s basic functions.

A U.N. press officer said nobody had previously donated a substantial sum directly to the United Nations. He noted that, since the U.N. had already expressed its gratitude, "I can't really see us voting it down."

Although Turner has not become a recluse like Kane did at the end of his life, he has certainly kept his distance from reporters, refusing to talk at any length about the gift since he first made it. He has conceded, however, that tax benefits are one of the advantages of making his gift to the U.N. That has led *USA Today* and others to speculate that the Turner family may actually profit by as much as $100 million from the transaction. That's not quite right. However, there is no question that the tax breaks involved make it much easier for him to part with his assets.

Here's why. Turner gets an income-tax deduction equal to the donation's value. That is, if Turner had decided to sell his Time Warner stock and keep the cash, he would have owed income taxes on the proceeds from the sale. In his bracket, those taxes would have come to about $400 million. In addition, because Turner is giving the stock to his pro-U.N. foundation rather than selling it, he doesn't have to pay a 20 percent capital gains tax on the amount the stock has appreciated since he acquired it. (Investment experts estimate that the capital gains tax would have totaled about $170 million.) Finally, inheritance taxes would have claimed about 55 percent of the stock's value if Turner had left it to his heirs: to them, the stock was never really worth more than about half of its $1 billion nominal value, anyway.

Even so, assuming the stock doesn't collapse in value, it would have been worth *something*, and probably more than the tax breaks, to Turner's heirs. Another caveat: tax laws allow Turner to deduct no more than 30 percent of his adjusted gross income as a gift. That means Turner must make more than $300 million a year if he wants to write off the entire sum—not an impossibility, but far from a sure thing. "To be fair, you have to remember that no one ever got rich giving billions away," says Steve Chandler, a charitable investment adviser at the Venture Family Wealth Group. "But this was remarkably well constructed."

Of course, Turner could have another financial incentive—albeit an obscure one—to finance U.N. programs. As one of the largest landowners in the United States, Turner owns approximately 12,000 head of bison—about ten percent of all the buffalo in the U.S. For the past few years, to the ridicule of his Montana neighbors, Turner has been positioning himself to profit enormously if people ever decide to consume buffalo meat in even a fraction of the amount they eat cattle and pork. He has spoken on behalf of the National Buffalo Association, reminding audiences that buffalo meat is a cheaper, healthier meat alternative. And he's done it enough to worry cattle ranchers, who think Turner will condition his foundation's funding of food programs on the U.N.'s using buffalo. "Let's just say I'm reconsidering now raising some bison," says Jim Hush, a Kansas rancher who sells his meat only to nonprofit organizations. "That may be where all the business for me is soon if Turner gets his way."

The most plausible explanation, however, has more to do with glory than money: Turner wants to win a Nobel Prize. In his exhaustive biography, *Ted Turner: It Ain't As Easy As It Looks*, Porter Bibb writes: "He is not above recognizing the value of his contributions and has recently been heard telling intimates, with an absolutely straight face, that he hopes someday to have achieved enough to deserve the Nobel Peace Prize." That's largely why, friends say, he launched the U.S.-Soviet Goodwill Games; that's why, they say, Turner financed and broadcast Jacques Cousteau's brilliant but costly documentaries. Turner carefully staged CNN's inaugural in Atlanta to position himself as an international missionary of peace, according to reporters there. And after CNN hoisted a U.N. flag over their headquarters, Turner told reporters: "I'm going to travel around to every foreign country and get the head of the country to show me the things he's proudest of about his country. And send it all back by satellite."

One longtime employee of the Turner Networks says the gift "is just part of his *Citizen Kane* complex." Maybe Ted Turner has finally found his Rosebud. •

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SLAMMING GATES

By David Shenk

It's kind of funny that Bill Gates has embraced the World Wide Web with so much enthusiasm and investment capital lately, because the Web sure doesn't seem to like him. Try an online search for "Microsoft sucks," and you'll find websites that depict Gates being shot repeatedly, poked in the face with darts, and revealed to be the devil. Offline, Gates's list of antagonists is mushrooming almost as rapidly as his net worth, with vocal detractors in every branch of the federal government, many state attorney-general offices, the national media, brand-name universities, and leading consumer-action groups. Cheering on this crusade is a sizable grassroots chorus of software engineers, Web professionals, corporate systems managers, and disgruntled customers.

"Whenever I write a column that is critical of Microsoft," says Paul Gillen, editor-in-chief of *Computerworld*, "invariably, a half-dozen 'attaboy' letters will come out of the woodwork—'Way to go,' 'Stick it to 'em,' 'Evil empire,' and 'They suck.'" And when Gillen praises Microsoft? "I get letters saying: 'You're just sucking up,' 'You're in Bill Gates's back pocket,' or 'You suck.'" These acidic notes, Gillen says, do not seem to come from a short list of recycled names. "It's a wide and diverse group." Microsoft-bashing has become so common in the Bay Area, says writer Po Bronson, "It's like talking about the weather in Minnesota. I literally have conversations about Microsoft with everybody, every day, all the time. It is omnipresent."

But why? Does Gates really deserve this hostility, or is Microsoft-bashing just a cheap new common currency in an otherwise hyper-fragmented society? Or, worse, are the growing number of Gates-haters simply pawns of high-octane competitors like Lotus, Oracle, Netscape, and Sun, for whom Microsoft-hating is an important part of doing business? A close examination of the culture of Microsoft-loathing reveals an eclectic variety of denunciations—some sound, others specious. Accusations vary wildly in levels of intelligence, maturity, and credibility. Critics are by no means coordinated in their criticism, nor are they always necessarily conscious of the real reasons behind their antipathy. All of which would be merely amusing, if it weren't so consequential. There's a serious case to be made for containing the Microsoft behemoth, but it's getting lost amid the name-calling, corporate rivalry, and not-so-petty jealousy.

The simplest—and perhaps the soundest—critique of Microsoft is the one that preoccupies the Justice Department and is the subject of this week's hearings in federal court: namely, that the company engaged in anticompetitive tactics to establish what amounts to a monopoly over various sectors of the software industry. Microsoft was able to establish MS-DOS and subsequently Windows as the standard PC operating system by exacting a royalty for every PC sold regardless of whether its operating system was installed. Then the company leveraged its ubiquity and deep pockets to push products like Office, Encarta, and Internet Explorer, thus securing market share for products that surely would not have sold as well on merit alone.

Although Microsoft likes to portray all critics as ambitious corporate rivals or failed competitors, the apparent unfairness of Microsoft's rise has inspired an awful lot of sincere criticism. And the gripes are not all ancient computing history. "To me, there is a difference between competition and what they do," says Mitch Stone, a consumer with no ties to the industry, who created the "Boycott Microsoft" website. "In August 1996, Microsoft began aggressively distributing Explorer 3.0 for free. That seemed unfair to me, a pretty deliberate effort to destroy a much smaller competitor. As a consumer, I couldn't see how that benefited me any, or anyone else either.... There is such a thing as being a good corporate citizen, and deliberate efforts to remove competitors from the marketplace—that's an ethical violation." This is not just Stone's conjecture about Microsoft's intent, mind you: Steve Ballmer, Microsoft's executive vice president of sales and support, confirmed such suspicions in January 1997 when he told *Forbes*, "We're giving away a pretty good browser as part of the operating system. How long can they survive selling it?"

Microsoft has also perfected the use of "vaporware"—the strategy of quelling interest in a competitor's product through the use of tantalizing press releases. "In their typical vaporware act," says Audrie Krause, editor of the watchdog newsletter *The Microsoft Monitor*, "they say, 'We have this product that will soon be ready.'" This

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convinces many prospective purchasers to put on the brakes, she says. "It makes people say, 'Well, I guess we'll wait and see.' They've done this repeatedly over the years, and sometimes they don't even ever bring out the product. But they kill the market for another product by announcing way ahead of time that they're coming out with something competitive." Noted examples include Internet Explorer 3.0 for Unix, announced to ward off major purchases of Netscape but never actually released, and Microsoft Exchange, which the company promised would match Lotus Notes, feature for feature, years before it reached that level of functionality.

In a properly functioning competitive environment, rivals who create better products could withstand such pressure. But when Gates is faced with a competitor he can't easily beat, critics say, he either crushes or purchases it—thus *eliminating* the competition. "Theirs is a praying-mantis business model: they have sex with you, and then they eat you," says Gary Reback, the well-known Silicon Valley attorney representing a number of Microsoft's competitors, citing a familiar refrain. Such brute force combined with such wealth has transformed arguably the most innovative industry in history into a tightly controlled empire. "The basic model in the industry today is to be bought by Microsoft or to go out of business," observes Andrew Shapiro, a fellow at Harvard Law School's Center for Internet & Society. "Isn't that amazing? There's very little hope of independent success." Software entrepreneurs are in the strange and uncomfortable position, in other words, of having to answer to Microsoft in much the same way that a local factory apparatchik in the Soviet Union had to answer to the regional party boss.

One could make similar analogies about the way Microsoft has attempted to broaden its reach: "It goes beyond high-tech companies," says Bob Ingle, vice president of New Media of Knight-Ridder. "I think a fair chunk of corporate America is terrified of Microsoft, and they want an alternative." During the last dozen years, Gates's Microsoft has purchased a handful of promising software outfits, hired thousands of star programmers and researchers, co-founded a new cable network (MSNBC), snapped up the digital rights to the Bettman archive of still images, and invested heavily in cable TV (Comcast), satellites (Teledesic), network computing (Web-TV), and other Internet-related resources. "They are obviously going after the means to control all ways of accessing the Internet," says *Microsoft Monitor*'s Krause.

As important as serious Microsoft monitoring is, though, Gates-bashing is too widespread—and too visceral—to be a fuss over something as nuanced and arcane as antitrust law. Another agenda must be at work, and one need look no further than Microsoft's competitors to find it.

"If you want your company to get some attention," complains Microsoft spokesman Greg Shaw, "you say, 'Hmmm, how might I get my company covered? I think I'll come down on Microsoft.'" He's dead right, of course, and no one has done more to whip up the hostility than Netscape, Microsoft's archrival in the Web browser business. Marc Andreessen, Netscape's co-founder, has publicly compared Microsoft to the Mafia, boasting that his company refused what was supposed to be Microsoft's unrefusable offer to buy them out. "No horse heads in the bed yet," Andreessen said smugly. He also characterized the current Netscape-Microsoft browser contest as Bambi vs. Godzilla, portraying his company as not only the underdog, but also the ethically pure protagonist.

Condemning Gates not only helps companies gain the visibility and public admiration that firms crave; it also serves as ideal internal propaganda. Software is a quixotic and ruthless business. Vast fortunes are made and lost in very short order, and hard-working employees of ambitious companies easily slip into a bunker mentality. For those tens of thousands of people working off of little more than dark-roasted coffee fumes and stock options, Gates is not just a formidable competitor. He is also the ideal motivational device—a marionette of hate that CEOs like Oracle's Larry Ellison, or Sun's Scott McNeally and Lotus's Jeffrey Papows, love to yank. (McNeally and Papows, according to the latter, are "co-captains of the I-hate-Bill-Gates fan club. We just couldn't decide which of us hates him more.") Many thousands of industry laborers hate Microsoft primarily because they are trained to; for example, Ellison recently rallied his troops by displaying a giant computer-generated image of Gates giving Oracle employees the finger.

In fairness, Gates rivals like Ellison would never make headway if their claims didn't resonate with so many software engineers and computer users. MS "crapware," as some call it, is widely disparaged as inelegant and buggy. (Joke précis: Bill Gates dies and gets to choose between heaven and hell. On his tour of hell, it looks like a beach party, in contrast to heaven's park-bench serenity. After he chooses hell, though, it turns out to be a torturous, skin-flaying pit of despair. Gates asks St. Peter, "What happened to the hell you showed me before?" St. Peter looks down—from his Macintosh—and says: "Oh, that

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was just the demo.") The complaints are just too numerous and plainspoken to be mere rival propaganda. Says one information-systems manager, "I hate Microsoft because I am frequently put in a position of solving problems that would not have come up if my customer had bought software from another vendor." Another software professional (both insist on anonymity for reasons of job security) echoes this complaint, denouncing "their dominance of the software industry with crap."

Sentiments such as these have spawned hundreds of Web pages that protest Microsoft's allegedly inferior products. On the Net, there are endless how-many-Microsofties-does-it-take-to-screw-in-a-lightbulb jokes, Gates-bought-what? spoofs, and I-hate-Bill-because quips. There is also a deluge of adolescent puns (Microsnot, Microshaft, Microsuck, etc.), a Usenet conference called alt.destroy.microsoft, and enough gratuitous violence to fill a Tarantino script. ("Kill Bill Gates" appears twice as often as "Kill Bill Clinton.") An alien logging on from its own planet might wonder if Gates had killed more people than Adolf Hitler, or slightly fewer.

"It started when I saw my dad using Windows and it crashed every five minutes," says Chris Mutter, the 24-year-old Austrian creator of what he claims was the very first anti-Microsoft "Hate Page"—www.enemy.org—which went online in 1994. "I was just angry because here was a company who is the leader in the PC software market and ships its products with that many bugs and limitations." Enemy.org, a member of something called the International Anti-MS Network, features many of the classics in the Bill-hating genre—the "Internet Exploder" and "WinBlows" parody icons, the depiction of Gates with horns and glowing red eyes, the gun to Gates's exploding head, and so on, much of it clearly the work of adolescent lampooners reacting instinctively to a corporate behemoth. "YOU have been part of a force that has done everything humanly possible to ensure that using a computer ... is a living hell for any person without a legal education," writes enemy.org contributor Rune Jacobsen to MS employees who might be visiting the site. "You therefore have to accept that you are a subject of hate from computer users all over the world, and this is our only way to get back at you."

But if Microsoft software is so inferior and the company treats customers that badly, how does the company continue to prevail in the free market? Ruthlessness and deep pockets are not enough to keep any suite of products so astoundingly popular on the consumer and corporate level. Contrary to the stereotype of a company that possesses a monopoly, Microsoft uses its wealth to improve its products, even if they still remain inferior to some rivals. "This time," Apple co-founder Steve Jobs told *Fortune* in 1996, "Microsoft has the technology to compete on quality." Far from succumbing to the pride of success and indolence that can come with immense wealth (thousands of current and former Microsoft employees are stock-options millionaires), the company is plowing an extraordinary amount of money into increasing the quality of its software. In many cases, Microsoft is bankrolling several competing internal software teams.

Gates often answers critics by arguing that, when it comes to information technology, it's impossible to have a true monopoly. "In a field like ours," Gates told NBC a few years ago, "there isn't much in the way of power." That's a little bit like Paul McCartney saying there isn't very much money to be made in the music business. Gates's pretense of meekness is outrageous and patently dishonest, but his claim does speak to the industry's peculiar power dynamics. In a business built on speedy innovation, even a powerhouse like Microsoft is not assured future dominance, or even future success. Though the Windows operating system currently dominates the personal-computer market, it is entirely conceivable that Sun's Java technology, for example, in combination with a future generation Web browser, could soon render exclusive operating systems such as Mac OS and Windows obsolete. Would you feel self-assured as the leader in the telegraph business if you had an inkling that the telephone was about to be invented—*by someone else*?

From this angle, Microsoft starts to look like the all-American quarterback who is in his prime and knows it. And the bashers? They begin to look like malcontents who kvetch about the weather so much that they don't notice the sun coming out. In the acrid digital space of the most vociferous Microsoft haters, truth and innuendo merge to form a preposterous case against the company and its leader. "Microsoft is in a bind," says *Boston Globe* technology columnist Simson Garfinkel. "If they put out bad software, people criticize them for putting out bad software, and if they put out good software, people criticize them for dominating the industry."

If the software isn't *that* bad, and is getting much better, why do we love to hate Microsoft so? Why have I, for example, casually bashed Microsoft in conversation and in prose (written using Microsoft Word), or referred to the software-media giant as the "evil empire" plenty of times (before and after cashing Microsoft checks for an online commentary I wrote for the Microsoft Network)? Why does the acrimony feel as prevalent in New York as Po Bronson says it is in California?

One spur, clearly, is Gates's wealth. When he was worth just three or four billion dollars, it was heady—the unlikely triumph of a computer geek. Forty billion, though, engenders in many of us a vague sense of unease, compounded by the fact that it comes from the sales of hundreds of millions of products that, stacked together, wouldn't stretch to the end of your driveway, or even to the end of your hand. Microsoft, by some accounts, the second most capitalized company on the planet, is the only corporate colossus in history whose entire product line could be eliminated with a giant magnet.

The more powerful reason, though, is techno-angst. The current phase of the information revolution has been a psychic whirlwind, for good and for ill. Software—especially Microsoft software—has become such an integral part of our culture that it is almost impossi-

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ble to imagine life without it. (If forced to give up either your personal computer or one finger for the rest of your life, which would you choose? One in three would give up the digit, according to Philip Nicholson, one expert on "technostress.") The remarkable velocity of information and increased demand on consumer attention can also produce significant stress and distraction. Our emerging "attention economy," whereby profits flow from grabbing the consumer's attention, however fleetingly, inevitably yields a noisier, more vulgar society.

In venting our techno-angst, we instinctively take aim at its most visible emblem. Some of us do so harmlessly under our breath, others turn it into a showcase of juvenescence. With the spectacular success of Microsoft, with the understandable fixation on Gates's personal fortune, and with his conspicuous efforts to establish himself as the leading visionary of the personal-computing revolution, Gates has been transformed into a potent cultural icon. He isn't just very rich and very famous. Like all dominant icons (Monroe, Reagan, Sinatra, etc.), he embodies an arresting social transformation. We look at him and see our technological future, warts and all. As the upstart personal-computing industry has blossomed into a computing-communications juggernaut, becoming—as of late 1997—the largest industry in the nation, we project onto Gates our hopes, fears, dark suspicions—but mostly our (understandable) ignorance. We suddenly find ourselves fastened to an industry that few truly comprehend, but that rockets ahead regardless.

But if critics can't get over their current spate of anger, they may ultimately be doing Microsoft a great favor. For it is precisely the emotionalism of its competitors, says the *Globe*'s Simson Garfinkel, that has helped Microsoft stay on top. "Lotus did great until they started focusing on Microsoft instead of focusing on their customers," says Garfinkel. "Netscape has made exactly the same mistake. Now Scott McNeally is making this competition with Microsoft very personal, swiping at every possible opportunity, rather than focusing on their customers. At the big Sun Java One conference last year, McNeally's keynote was dedicated to why Active X, Microsoft's program, is a problem. That's really bad. You shouldn't make the keynote of your address bashing another company. And now Oracle's Larry Ellison is focusing on Microsoft instead of his own customers. Whenever a company does that, they lose."

The case against Gates, if it is going to succeed, will do so on the strength of hopes and not fears; ingenuity, not insecurity; ambition, not envy. A more thoughtful attack on Microsoft would focus, as MIT researcher and software designer Philip Greenspun does, on the importance of innovation and on Microsoft's apparent stifling of it over the last several years. Greenspun is the creator of the infamous Bill Gates Personal Wealth Clock, possibly the deftest online jab at Gates. Here, Gates's steroidal wealth—$41.0423 billion at the moment this sentence was written—can be tracked minute by minute. The clock was designed, explains Greenspun, as a swipe at the man who has the gall "to make so much money writing software that ignores the users." But this is also Gates's secret weapon, Greenspun argues. Truly great software systems, he explains, perversely tend to be extremely vulnerable to competition, because they can be broken down into well-documented components. Thus, any individual component can be replaced by one that is engineered to the same spec. "If you're a bad engineer and you can't quite finish the specs and you think that the specs aren't really needed, then you end up with a nasty pile of code with lots of bugs, a system where the guts depend on everything else," where the software works only with programs created by the same sloppy engineers.

Thus, asserts Greenspun, Microsoft gets rich not *despite* but *because* it produces inferior software. In a fairer world, he says, "companies like Hewlett-Packard would be the winners because they make high-quality products. It's a shame that the Gates we have is uninterested in technology. Consumers don't know what they're missing." According to this analysis, the real power of the information revolution has been to spur innovation about what technology can do for people. That inspiration has spread through the business, which is why everyone from 16-year-old webmaster James Baughn (author of yet another anti-MS site) to MIT's Greenspun understands that, as spectacular as computing is right now, it would be even more sensational if Microsoft were weaker.

This ethereal argument, repeated by Mitch Stone, Gary Reback, and most other serious critics, is the abstract sibling of the Justice Department critique, the vaguest and yet by far the most compelling reason for anyone to hate and/or fear Microsoft: consider, in the stunted software culture described by Andrew Shapiro, what we've already missed, and what we'll miss out on tomorrow and the next day. If there is little hope of independent success from even marvelous innovation, innovation itself is inevitably stifled. This is *It's a Wonderful Life* in reverse: without Gates, our small towns and big cities might be so much better off.

Short of such a collective critique, it may well be Gates's game to lose. As long as Microsoft keeps focused on its own business, maintains that hungry feeling, and stays (more or less) within the bounds of the law, it is bound to remain profitable even as it inspires a continuing spiteful undercurrent. Of course, technology has a way of turning the tables rather suddenly. Regardless of his company's foresight, toughness, breadth of investment, and research, Gates knows as well as anyone that his days as technology king could come to a fairly swift end. At that point, assuming that the end of his dominance would spur a plummet in the Microsoft stock price, he would become an underdog and, thus, a sympathetic figure. Letters would start pouring into editorial offices: "Stop picking on Microsoft!" Politicians would clamor to kiss his children. The Web would start crawling with I-♡-Bill sites. People would start arguing about who loved Bill most. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Tough Guys and Others

What an avalanche of articles and books followed the arrival of Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* in 1994. I've never seen a greater mass of material about a film that was only the director's second. Hallelujah choruses resounded—not only in the U.S.—for what was basically a blend of some well-known previous styles. No question that Tarantino did his blending smoothly and that *Pulp Fiction* had its amusements and (facile) shocks. But that it was the peak of human achievement toward which the human race had been aspiring ever since the first protozoa wriggled out of the slime, one could doubt.

I began to feel a bit sorry for Tarantino. After that coronation, he had to face the now-increased problem of his next film. He seemed to be temporizing. He appeared in some pictures, he produced some, but the written-and-directed successor to *Pulp Fiction* didn't appear. Now it's here; and, almost patly, it's the flat, self-exposing dud that fate often keeps in store for the initially overpraised.

Jackie Brown (Miramax), adapted from an Elmore Leonard novel, has a plot—about a gun dealer, drugs, detectives, and a bail bondsman—that cannot be commended for clarity. Every one of the characters seems to know exactly what he or she is doing and why, but, after a while, we're willing to take their surety as surety enough and just let the picture roll. To heighten the importance of all this hugger-mugger, Tarantino often puts a title on the screen, identifying the place or time of a scene. These portentous titles are merely pretentious.

The setting is L.A. and environs. The main figure, eventually, is Jackie Brown, an airline hostess in her 40s, played by Pam Grier, who works for a line flying between Mexico and the U.S. and who smuggles drugs and money into the country for the gun dealer, Samuel L. Jackson. Jackson has a girlfriend, high most of the time, done by Bridget Fonda, and a henchman just out of the pen, Robert De Niro. Jackson, to help a friend, engages a bail bondsman, Robert Forster, and there are two detectives, Michael Keaton and Michael Bowen, who are working on Grier to lead them to Jackson.

Out of all this busyness, all the hot controversies about matters not entirely clear to us, all the schemes and counter-schemes (some of them repeated from different points of view), emerges chiefly the fact that Tarantino is bent on establishing personal trademarks: casual killings (as in *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*), disproportionately bland talk about those killings, the general ambience of entomology with human insects.

It's notable that, in his ultra-realistic films, those casual killings are kept that way because no one is ever around—in a parking lot or a side street—to witness them; and the killer never checks beforehand to make sure of this. It's also notable that Tarantino adds, to the hip atmosphere, some notably quaint cinematic touches: a split-screen shot, many cross-fades between sequences, immense close-ups. Then, as if to balance these antiquities, there's the soundtrack of raucous rock to assure us that, no matter how much the director knows about old movies, he's still cool.

Part of the reason for our weariness with the plot's twists and turns is that only two of the characters have any interest. Jackson's gun dealer is a cliché, as is Fonda's layabout girl, as are the two detectives. De Niro's ex-con is too torpid even to be a cliché. But Forster, who has a touch about him of Charles Bronson, seems a credible man, and then there's Grier. Tarantino's best achievement in this film is his casting and use of her. This Junoesque woman, former star of black action flicks, now almost 50, has poise and intelligence and wit. Films like *Jackie Brown* don't need charm, but they do need means of access. Forster and Grier provide some chance of it.

The Tarantino question now is: Will he wait another three years or more to do still another pale reduction of *Pulp Fiction*?

Diction note: Very often in Jackson's dialogue he uses the word "nigger." The several layers of irony implicit in a black person's use of the word don't need explanation; but before long, the ironies peel off through frequent use, and we're left with just the ugliness of the word.

Ma Vie en Rose (Sony Pictures Classics), also known as *My Life in Pink*, is a small-scale, delicate Belgian film about a boy of eight or nine who wants to be a girl. Long before Ludovic has any overt sexual impulses, he has social and behav-

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Amistad. *Steven Spielberg and a first-rate cast really recreate the past. This story of the slaves who revolted on board the* Amistad *in 1839 is not complete, or completely balanced, here; but the significance and the agony are strong. (Reviewed 12/22/97)* **The Sweet Hereafter.** *Simple, quiet, poignant. About a town that loses most of its children in a school bus accident—and what follows. (12/8/97)* **The Wings of the Dove.** *Two of the three main characters are well realized in this colorful transcription of James. (12/1/97)* **The Winter Guest.** *Emma Thompson and her mother, Phyllida Law, play daughter and mother in this wintry yet somehow sardonic account of bereavements. Alan Rickman directs so exquisitely that the lack of thematic conclusion hardly matters. (1/5&12/98)* **—SK**

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ioral impulses to be female, and these cause something more than embarrassment to his parents.

This is the first feature by Alain Berliner, who wrote the screenplay with Chris vander Stappen. A man and wife with several children move into a new home in a suburb of Brussels where Dad has a new job. All goes swimmingly, with the Belgian equivalent of Welcome Wagons, etc., until Ludovic begins to behave like a girl—preferring skirts and long hair and make-up. It is not perversity, it is Ludovic. At first, patience prevails, in the parents and in Dad's boss. Of course, when Ludovic doesn't respond to warnings and punishments, nerves begin to fray. In time the boy's behavior becomes unbearable to both the boss and the community, and Dad loses his job. But—or and—Ludovic remains Ludovic, not through stubbornness. Through self.

The film's one dubious note is its moderately rosy ending. In another community, brought there by Dad's new job, the parents are resolved to understand and accept Ludovic. We can only hope that this would or could be true. Until that point the film is transfixingly poignant, which in great measure is because of the performances. Michele Laroque and Jean-Philippe Ecoffey, as Mom and Dad, give us patience in various stages of wearing thin and being refurbished; and Anne Cossens gives a small yet touching performance as Ludovic's sympathetic teacher.

Obviously the key performance is the Ludovic by Georges Du Fresne, whose career begins here. Obviously, too, he owes a great deal to Berliner, who has evoked precocious comprehension in him. The boy does more than imitate or obey a director: he seems, in some prodigious way, to understand Ludovic. It's a great risk to hang a whole film on the comprehension of a child. In the recent *Ponette*, where an even younger child was central, the result was amazing in terms of the little girl's ability to learn. Here Georges seems to be proceeding through the self of Ludovic. It's extraordinary. •

Jed Perl on Art

Acropolis Now

I.

In the Santa Monica foothills, with all of Los Angeles at its feet, the Getty Center may be the biggest cultural complex to open in this country since the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, and damned if it's not another heap of travertine. Richard Meier, who designed this good-taste extravaganza, doesn't go in for classical colonnades in the manner of Lincoln Center, where resurrecting Rome's Capitoline Hill was once presented as the latest in urban renewal, but there are plenty of old-meets-new metaphors at the Getty Center. This is an acropolis with a multilevel parking lot. The people at the Getty Trust made a spectacle of their hubris when they looked to Greece for a guiding architectural metaphor. Still, you can't wonder that they had Athens on their minds: this union of museum, library, and research facilities is about the importance of elite art in a democratic society. Which brings you to the four-billion-dollar question (that's roughly the size of the Getty's endowment). How does an institution, even with all the money in the world, go about nurturing something as mysterious as people's feelings about art? Obviously, the Getty Trust doesn't have all the answers, but they sure are thinking big thoughts and spending big bucks, and already you can see that their successes and their failures are going to be scaled to match.

For Richard Meier, the Getty is the biggest architectural commission of his lifetime, and probably also the biggest commission that anybody has received in our time. Meier has an eye for drop-dead elegant detailing and interestingly elaborated asymmetrical facades, and the Getty's bottomless coffers have allowed him to indulge his every High Modern whim. What he has brought to the project is the aplomb of the international award-winning architect, a way of regarding modernism as deluxe signature style that gives the Getty the all's-well-in-the-world shimmer that Harold Williams, who was president and chief executive officer of the Trust during the 13 years that the Center was being built, obviously had in mind.

Meier is unable to conceive of large spaces in terms of the experiences of the people who are moving through them, but the powers at the Getty are making the best of this colossal failure of architectural vision. While Meier's grids and circles and skylights are nothing but two-dimensional drawing-board conceits, his patrons have mastered an ad-campaign efficiency that seems to satisfy people, at least during the brouhaha of the opening. When I visited the Getty in December, Los Angeles was smogless and the views from Meier's terraces, and through his enormous windows, stretched spectacularly from the snowcapped San Gabriel Mountains to the sparkling Pacific. Every one of the Getty's half-a-dozen buildings was primed for a photo shoot. This is not architecture that pulls you in. It is a stand-offish kind of architecture. The buildings are there to pose, to vamp, to take their close-ups, Mr. Meier.

Set in the city that has built a multibillion-dollar entertainment industry out of the certainty that the public is never wrong, the Getty Trust may feel some embarrassment about its sworn goal, which is to teach people a thing or two. Museumgoers by and large want a cultural experience to go down easy, and that is where Meier comes in, with his sleek effects. High-end architectural projects have built-in powers of persuasion, so that it's no surprise that the Getty had become an icon even before the public arrived. I suppose that this is a case of the richest arts organization in America inventing its own reality. Art is supposed to create its own truth, of course; and there are certainly curators, scholars, and educators at the Getty who know something about that process. Under the direction of John Walsh, the museum has acquired a small selection of masterworks that prove the point. But when it comes to the devilishly complicated question of how best to present art to the public—and whose reality art is, anyhow—there are major disagreements, and the Getty can't help but send in its own specially trained Taste Police.

The Getty Center opens at a time when museumgoing is more of a national pastime than ever before, and with the Getty's parking lots already booked well into the spring, there can be no doubt that it is reaping the benefits. Yet the Getty is much more than a museum. The Trust's commitments to elementary-school art education, to conservation worldwide, and to advanced art historical studies have a particular urgency now. For the question of public support for the arts is in a tailspin of confusion, provoked by the NEA controversies and then deepened by a decline in corporate and public spending in the 1990s. The Getty is asking what people

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should see and learn, and when, and why. The problem with these questions is not only that there are no simple answers, but also that the most important answers are almost ineffable. Who's to say why Rembrandt's *St. Bartholomew,* one of the greatest paintings in the collection, becomes a big experience for one visitor and not another? And how do you measure the success of a program that a hundred schoolchildren attend, when the best imaginable result would be that it changes a single kid's life?

Ada Louise Huxtable, the critic who was involved in the initial architectural selection process at the Getty, has produced an essay for *Making Architecture: The Getty Center,* an in-house publication, in which she argues for Meier's buildings. She believes that Meier has indeed given complex ideas of beauty a public face. "In a democracy," she writes, "excellence is supposed to be available to all." At a time when "excellence has been redefined as privilege" by politically correct thinking, Huxtable pleads for the seriousness of the Getty's attempt to reverse the trend. Broadly speaking, she is not wrong. But she is writing for the defense, and so she may give the Getty's approach more credit for depth than it deserves. Meier, Williams, Walsh, and everybody else involved with the Getty like to emphasize how many thousands of meetings they all had, as if excellence has something to do with teamwork and consensus. Huxtable glides right past the thought that the problem-solving models of corporate culture, which seem to have a lot to do with how the Getty operates, might be responsible for turning "excellence" into a blandly correct label. It's too easy to blame the P.C. villains for everything that goes wrong with culture, when the self-proclaimed defenders of the best that high culture has to offer are on a slick marketing campaign of their own.

Lampposts along the boulevards and the avenues of Los Angeles have been hung with banners announcing "Your Getty Center." And if you can't resist the thought that this we-are-one view of museumgoing has a philistine edge, don't. Perhaps the people at the Getty adopt this philistine lightness because they are uncomfortable with the gap between their populist aspirations and the old modern faith in art as a difficult and private experience. By focusing some of its collecting energies on intimate works such as illuminated manuscripts, drawings, photographs, and cabinet-scaled paintings and bronzes, the Getty has emphasized the value of one-on-one experience. Yet even as the center was opening, Barry Munitz, the incoming president and CEO of the Trust, was saying that part of what he brings to the Getty from his previous job as chancellor of the California State University system is the experience of working in "a large public institution whose mission is socioeconomic mobility, urban outreach, global transformation."

I'm not sure that's quite what Huxtable has in mind. Yet Munitz has also said that "we live in . . . an uncivil age," and that "mass communications makes it worse, technology in many ways makes it worse." He's probably wondering what the person who comes to the Getty after seeing the banners on Wilshire Boulevard is going to think about the illuminations in a Byzantine manuscript of the New Testament. Those illuminated manuscripts are one of the glories of the collection, but they are almost certainly not what the public is coming to see. Can the folks at the Getty live with this paradox? Will they try to deny it? Will they try to do something about it? And what might that be?

Courtesy The Getty Center

THE GETTY MUSEUM, ENTRANCE FAÇADE

II.

Approaching the Getty Center along the San Diego Freeway, my first impression was that the buildings sit too high on their mountaintop, that there is something essentially artificial about the design. Reading *Building the Getty* (Knopf), the book that Richard Meier has published about his 13-year campaign, you begin to see why this might be. The Getty has treated that hill like a piece of silly putty, moving earth around to make a more artfully shaped mountain or to accommodate the demands of litigious neighbors, all the while honoring an agreement with the local homeowners association that not a teaspoonful of dirt could leave the site.

When you have parked your car and taken the couple-of-minute tram ride up the hill, you are confronted with such a labyrinth of staircases and plazas and balconies and parapets that you may not have the faintest idea where earth ends and architecture begins. This may be Meier's idea of seamlessness, but the site is so enveloped with architectural frills that it ends up feeling like the bionic peak. Meier can't miss with those eye-filling vistas, yet he rarely frames them with the assured simplicity that they deserve. The profiles of many of the buildings are so complicated that they fight the landscape. Occasionally, though, Meier pulls everything together. At the south end of the site, you are confronted by a simple rectangular portal, between two pavilions of the museum, that gives the illusion of opening into thin air, and then leads to a wonderful long parapet, from which you can look across to the ocean or down to an elegant cactus garden.

Meier has created half a dozen autonomous yet interrelated structures: the museum (which itself consists of five pavilions set around a plaza), the Research Institute, a building that combines the education and conservation departments, an administration building, an auditorium, and a restaurant. He must have wanted to give this ensemble the variousness that you have at the Acropolis, where structures built over a century of rapid architectural change are provocatively juxtaposed. Southern California is a place where Mediterranean allusions come naturally to mind. One precursor of the Getty is the Huntington Library in nearby San Marino, where separate library and gallery buildings are set in a fine Italianate setting with plunging vistas. The Getty is currently renovating its old home, a Roman-style villa in Malibu, where the classical collections are slated to be reinstalled in 2001. To be sure, Meier does not use classical forms, but his reruns of the International Style are themselves a kind of establishment classicism, and in the various buildings he

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mingles rectilinear grids and circles and cylinders as if they were his personal version of the classical orders.

Meier wants each building to contain echoes of the others. The most obvious consistency is in the materials. A play of light beige metal and rough travertine unifies the surfaces of all the buildings, and gives the center its picture-perfect milk-and-honey skin. Meier has produced at least one reasonably successful building, the center for conservation and education, at the northeast end. Here the strong horizontal impact of the exterior, complicated by a series of elegant grids, is set against the edge of the mountain in a way that recalls the sleek California modernism of Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler. Yet this is not a building that becomes more exciting as you move inside, since the interior office spaces fail to produce the kind of inside-outside expansiveness that the exterior has led you to hope for.

The name of Frank Lloyd Wright has been invoked by Meier and others, sometimes in relation to the cylindrical space that forms the entrance to the museum. What this inert interior has to do with the soaring force of New York's Guggenheim, I can't say. Meier's entrance is more like a prefab grain silo with lots of cutouts. Scattered around the museum are Meier-designed furnishings and bookstalls that suggest a Wright-inspired arts-and-craftsy mood. (Or maybe it was inspired by Greene and Greene, whose greatest surviving house is in Pasadena.) But this is just trimming. Nowhere at the Getty does Meier make even a stab at the kind of part-to-whole rhythmic conviction that is Wright's glory. If California offers a precedent for the sort of vast civic scheme that Meier has attempted in Los Angeles, it is Wright's Marin County Civic Center, which has a lyric monumentality that reacts to and reinvents the landscape. Meier's problem is that he cannot compose in time and space; his architecture only works in coffee-table books. The museum's entrance rotunda should expand on the human scale and get your eyes moving, so that you're prepared for what you're going to see in the galleries; but Meier's spaces have no flow. There is no gathering force. The courtyard at the heart of the museum is bleak. Nowheresville.

Meier has strategies aplenty, and for a while the visitor's eyes are kept busy. I enjoyed studying the complicated orchestration of banisters and railings in white or shiny or matte stainless steel. I was beguiled by hyper-refined details, such as the dark marble insets in white

ART SCENES *Galleries, Exhibits, and Events*

Salander-O'Reilly Galleries 20 East 79th Street, NYC, 10021, 212-879-6606. Monday through Saturday, 9:30-5:30. *Gustave Courbet: Later Paintings*. An exhibition of paintings by Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) from the 1860s and 1870s including landscapes, marines, figures, and still life. This exhibition will examine the range of Courbet's work in the productive period leading up to his leaving France for Switzerland and during his life in exile. January 6 - February 28. *Mostly Skies*. A group exhibition of 19th and 20th century works. This exhibition examines artists' fascination with landscape and its relationship to the sky and atmosphere. Among the works on view are paintings by Corot, Rousseau, John Constable, Paul Huet, Edward Lear, and photography by Joseph Sudek. January 6 - January 31.

Antique Navajo and Mexican Textiles Andrew Nagen Gallery. P.O. Box 1306, Corrales, NM 87048, 505-898-5285. By appointment, please. Since 1976 we have specialized in the sale, purchase and appraisal of classic, transitional and regional textiles from all the Southwestern Native American and Hispanic cultures. We supply or request photos for purchase, sale or approval. No catalog.

Swann Galleries 104 East 25th Street, NYC, 212-254-4710. Monday through Friday, 10-6; previews Saturdays prior to auctions, 10-4. AUCTIONS: January 29: Vintage posters featuring winter sports, travel, and original maquettes by important poster artists. February 5: Autographs including Americana, artists, musicians, scientists, and writers including science fiction. Please write or call for preview hours, quarterly newsletter with full auction schedule, and to purchase catalogs. Now accepting consignments for spring auctions.

Aperture/Burden Gallery 20 East 23rd Street, NYC, 10010, 212-505-5555 x325. Tuesday through Saturday, 11-6. *Northwest Passage: The Photographs of Robert Glenn Ketchum*. This exhibit is a spectacular overview of the Arctic landscape created during a private boat crossing of the Northwest Passage from Alaska to Greenland. Ketchum and his Master Printer, Michael Wilder, are considered some of the finest printmakers in color photography, and this mid-career exhibit of nearly 60 prints is the culmination of their extraordinary 25-year working relationship. Also published as an Aperture book of the same title. Through January 17.

Jack Kilgore & Co., Inc. 154 East 71st Street, NYC, 10021, 212-650-1149. Monday through Friday 10-6, Saturday 11-5. *Old Master Paintings*. Dutch and Flemish Seventeenth Century Old Master Paintings including Rembrandt pupil Ferdinand Bol's *The Philosopher*, Anthony Van Dyck, and Joachim Beuckelaer; as well as a display of genres by Cornelis van Haarlem, Dirk Hals, Cornelis Bega, Jan Wynants; and portraits by Johannes Verspronck and Lucas Franchoys. January 12 - February 14.

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marble steps, or the shallow circular birdbath carved into a long stone slab behind the Research Institute. What all these touches suggest is a taste for mannerist elaboration that lurks beneath Meier's cool facade. Meier has said that one of the first buildings that he studied in preparing for the Getty was John Soane's Dulwich Picture Gallery, outside London; and Soane is another classicist with mannerist tendencies. Meier has learned something from the clarity of the Dulwich galleries, but he doesn't create a flow of spaces that has any of Soane's loopy éclat. The arrangement of the Getty collections in virtually free-standing pavilions creates a confused, stop-and-start museumgoing experience. Ironically enough, it recalls the disastrous 1960s design of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, a plan that that museum, despite later remodelings, has yet to live down.

Some of Meier's subterranean eclecticism is a good thing. The main picture galleries—which were the result of an elaborate negotiating process between architect, museum officials, and an interior designer—have a refined traditional character that is quite effective. They put me in mind of Louis Kahn. In other areas, Meier evokes the '60s corporate glamour of architectural firms such as Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo. A luxurious small garden, with verdant ferns and palms, snuggled next to the administrative offices, recalls the Ford Foundation in New York. And a little fountain composed of three jets of water, natural rocks, and travertine walls, near the southeast end of the museum, suggests the kind of thing that Noguchi did for Chase Manhattan. But these are good taste moments, not architectural ideas. For a complex such as this to work, there has to be some immediate, unifying image. You need to feel that all the leitmotifs and the variations add up, that the slightest particulars are linked to the broadest characteristics. When you're looking for that kind of architectural imagination, Meier does not fit the bill.

Meier and the Getty worked together for 13 long years, and obviously there were times when everybody felt that this was a marriage made in hell. After seeing the results of the battles that Meier lost, however, I concluded that once the Getty had thrown in their lot with him, they should have let him have his way. A good deal of press attention has been focused on Meier's defeats. The design of the decorative arts galleries was given to the New York architect Thierry Despont, and the commission for the central garden, which Meier was originally slated to do, went to the environmental artist Robert Irwin. When Irwin's wilfully eccentric garden has grown up, its silly anti-Meierian gestures, such as the jagged switchback path and the rusted metal elements, will be muted; but there seems little doubt that Meier's classical Tuscan hillside would have been a better bet. As for Despont's period rooms, they are pure Vegas kitsch, which is probably all you could expect from a decorator who wows computer-age moguls (among them Bill Gates) by proving that the super-rich can customize reality.

There is a certain amount of anti-Meier feeling that crops up here and there in the design of the Getty Center. I can understand the sentiment, except that these bits of guerrilla theater don't seem to be about wishing that Meier did what he does better, they seem to be about wishing that he didn't do this sort of modern thing at all. This bizarre in-house critique culminates in the restaurant, which is one of the most successful buildings on the site, with the cool drama of an Art Deco ocean liner and views to match. Into this lovely space the Getty has invited Alexis Smith, a Los Angeles artist well-known for her campy sensibility, to present some smart-alecky jokes on the theme of taste. Emblazoned over the walls of the restaurant are a cartoon silhouette of Adam and Eve, who took the first taste, along with a Chippendale chair, a classical vase, and a bottle of wine. This creates a sort of demented billboard version of a Greek vase painting. And it is just the warm-up for a direct hit on Meier. On one wall, Smith has surrounded a cartoon of a conventional modern-style living room of the 1950s with big letters that spell out MODERNISIMO AND ELEGANTE. Those showoffishly spelled words may point to a problem with Meier's work, but why does an institution that has spent a billion dollars to realize one man's idea of excellence feel the need to parody it? Are they scared to death by the excellence in which they claim to believe? Or do they know that they are falling short of it?

III.

Every move at the Getty has been closely considered, and none more so than the lengths to which John Walsh has gone to isolate the collections that were essentially formed by J. Paul Getty himself, the oil millionaire who founded the museum in the '50s, from the collections that Walsh has built since he arrived at the Getty in 1983. This seems to be the very point of Despont's designs for the decorative arts galleries: to set them apart from the rest of the museum, as if with a dayglo highlighter. We are meant to understand that whatever the unquestionable refinement of the craftsmanship in Getty's eighteenth-century furniture, this work exudes a gaudy royalist aura that is no longer the museum's style. J. Paul Getty's other major collecting specialty, classical art, is also being fenced off by the current administration. There is a temporary show from the classical collection, but all of it will ultimately be installed in the villa in Malibu, which is being renovated for the purpose. By setting the old man's personal obsessions into italics, John Walsh distances himself from this Anglophile's historical-fantasy view of collecting.

Walsh understands that, although he has one of the largest budgets in the museum world, the masterpieces necessary to create a world-class survey of European painting and sculpture are no longer available, and so he has wisely opted for a detached connoisseur's approach—an exemplary, not-quite-of-this-world kind of taste. Walsh wants to use Getty's millions to create a hushed, almost monastic vision. He wants a museum with a scholarly mien. He wants to set art in a place apart, where life's passions are diffused, transcended. This is a museum where every detail seems to exude the collective wisdom of countless postdocs. The Getty has the feel, on a rather large scale, of a great university museum. The holdings can be far more usefully compared to those at, say, the Fogg Museum at Harvard than to those at the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the National Gallery. Every selection has a point to make; the art historical landscape is filled in with carefully selected vignettes.

There is a great deal of perspicacious, enlightened acquisition going on here. The move from neoclassicism to romanticism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has inspired an especially intelligent group of purchases. In Pierre-Jean David d'Angers's bust of a young woman, *Mary Robinson*, the suavely severe treatment of the white marble has an erotic pull. The gallery containing this and other neoclassical sculptures makes one understand why the Getty hoped for so long to acquire Canova's *Three Graces*: it would have capped an ambitious gathering of European meditations on the Greek experience, which echo the Getty's impressive ancient holdings. In the painting galleries, there is an Italian landscape by Christen Købke and several Géricaults, including a fascinating erotic scene with a man and two women in a shadowy alcove bed. And there have been some related decorative arts acquisitions, such

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as a magnificent late-eighteenth-century Neapolitan chair with almost Art Nouveau arms, and paneling from a room by the eccentric French neoclassicist Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, which has unfortunately been given what amounts to a Donald Trump-style installation by the awful Thierry Despont.

The Getty's philosophy of acquisition seems to be to go where the opportunities are, and the museum should be given full credit for the single-mindedness with which it has pursued work of quality even in areas that are not calculated to excite the general public. The Getty has acquired some absolutely extraordinary works on paper. Its very late Cézanne watercolor, a still life with blues and reds of almost Limoges-like depth and brilliance, was one of the highlights of the big Cézanne show in Philadelphia in 1996, and it looks every bit as beautiful in the drawing gallery at the Getty. There is also a magnificent Poussin wash drawing of a screen of trees, with long slim trunks overlapping and mirroring one another to suggest a serpentine dance.

The museum's decision to focus on illuminated manuscripts is especially daring. This is an area of little interest to today's collectors, not to mention the public. What is now a separate department in the museum was begun with the purchase, in 1983, of the Ludwig Collection. It includes such spectacular items as a twelfth-century New Testament, with images of the four evangelists on gold grounds that, despite their slight dimensions, have some of the architectural monumentality of mosaics in the grandest Byzantine churches. Among more recent manuscript acquisitions, I especially admired a mid-fifteenth-century *Book of Hours* with a stupendous double-page by Jean Fouquet of *Simon de Varie in Prayer Before the Virgin and Child*. This miniature has a transcendent richness, elegance, and clarity. Looking at Fouquet's composition, I feel as if all the tremendous opposing forces of a time in Europe when a chivalric feudalism was giving way to a bourgeois lucidity have been put under the microscope. Fouquet renders the sparkling beauty of the Virgin's dress and de Varie's armor as if these garments were the rarest butterfly's wings.

This Fouquet miniature is one of the very greatest paintings in the Getty collection, right up there with Rembrandt's *St. Bartholomew*, Schongauer's *Madonna and Child*, and Poussin's *Landscape with a Calm* and *Holy Family* (which the Getty owns jointly with the Norton Simon). Others will cite Masaccio's *St. Andrew*, Mantegna's *Adoration of the Magi*, and Pontormo's *Portrait of a Halberdier*. Still, we can probably all agree that there is not a single painting in the Getty collection without which we would feel that the history of painting was incomplete—nothing on the order of Bellini's *St. Francis* in the Frick, or Bruegel's *Harvesters* in the Metropolitan, or Titian's *Rape of Europa* in the Gardner. (I'm not sure there is a painting of that order in all of Los Angeles, except, perhaps, the Zurbarán still life at the Norton Simon.) As anybody who has followed the Getty's adventures in the art market over the past decade knows, it is not for want of trying that they do not own such paintings. Such works are simply not to be had. And in their stead, what you mostly get at the Getty is admirable, even excellent, but the kind of thing that in the greatest museums fills up the spaces between the masterpieces.

Still, the Getty does have its stronger and its weaker areas. The seventeenth and eighteenth century galleries have a brilliant consistency. A trio of works by Canaletto, Bellotto, and Tiepolo, arranged on one wall, epitomize the virtuoso heights to which painting had risen at the end of the Baroque age. In the nineteenth century galleries, though, the focus is not as sharp. The Getty has made some very expensive purchases, such as Van Gogh's *Irises* and Manet's *Rue Mosnier with Flags*, but taken together these works don't give a very convincing picture of the later part of the century. The Van Gogh is too decorative to suggest his angular, wrenching spirit, and the Manet, although a peerless demonstration of the artist's devil-may-care casualness, doesn't offer even a glimmer of his gonzo, hell-bent ambitions. At the Getty, you get the feeling that later-nineteenth-century French art was getting bogged down in deft small effects, when nothing could be farther from the truth.

The Getty offers several other versions of the nineteenth century, in its drawing collection, and in its extraordinary photography department, which began in the 1980s with the purchase of five of the most important private collections in the world. The museum is quite obviously looking to these photographic holdings to provide a compelling portrait of the transition into the twentieth century, since the museum made a decision in the '80s not to collect paintings after 1900, in part because the Trust was worried about spreading thin what was then a much smaller endowment. By now almost everybody who watches the Getty agrees that, whether or not the cut-off date of 1900 is maintained in the paint-

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ing collection, the museum is willy-nilly moving into twentieth-century art. Alexis Smith is one of a number of artists, including Edward Ruscha, who have done commissions for various Getty buildings. The museum's holdings of work by Walker Evans, who is (I would say) the single greatest photographer of this century, are already the subject of a very impressive book, and will be featured in an exhibition later this year. And around the time of the opening, much attention was being paid to the purchase of David Hockney's huge photo-collage of the California desert, *Pearblossom Hwy, 11-18 April 1986, No. 2,* which amounts to the museum's most substantial holding in contemporary art. This panoramic, photographic work by a contemporary painter keeps from breaking the 1900 cut-off by a technicality.

IV.

The twentieth century may be slipping into the Getty by several back doors, but in the painting and sculpture collection, which is by any definition the heart of the museum, the end comes resoundingly, apocalyptically, with James Ensor's huge *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* (1888). It is not, strictly speaking, the latest painting in the collection, but Ensor's 14-foot-wide canvas, filled to overflowing with the manic ghoul-faces of Mardi Gras revelers, does eclipse everything else in the final gallery of this survey of European painting. Ensor was 28 when he painted his urban freak show, and the luridly rendered faces that fill practically every last inch of canvas, the masked ones and the unmasked ones, seem to be bubbling up from a young man's self-congratulatory paranoia. Ensor is not an artist who will leave well enough alone, and just in case you might miss the point, he has turned the Christ figure, astride a donkey in the middle distance, into a self-portrait. The daylit nightmare becomes an allegory of the woeful mistreatment of the sainted artist in modern times.

This painting is John Walsh's parting shot, and it cannot be ignored. By presenting museumgoers with Ensor's raucously astringent panorama of fin-de-siècle pathologies, Walsh may mean to suggest that perhaps the public would not want to venture too far into the modern world. In the 1880s, many painters—among them Van Gogh, Renoir, and Seurat—were fascinated by men and women who lived lives very different from their own. The painter who observed a range of citizens at work and at play could feel an expansive attachment to the most casual acquaintance, but all that Ensor seems to see is the weird otherness of the crowd, which becomes a sea of creepy faces, each more self-absorbed and loutish than the next. This is the Painter of Modern Life with whom the Getty chooses to close the story of art. Could it be that some people at the Getty find a personal significance in the painting's us-against-them theme? Could *Christ's Entry into Brussels* strike some curators, scholars, and officials as an emblem of the Getty Center's entry into Los Angeles?

Richard Meier's Getty Center completes a cycle of American philanthropy that had its origins around the time that Ensor, an ocean away, was painting his garish, self-justifying picture. J. Paul Getty was born in 1892, and the public-spiritedness that his Trust exemplifies today is distantly related to the ideas of Andrew Carnegie, whose money came from steel rather than oil, and who was dedicated to public giving along principles that he described in *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays,* which appeared in 1889. At the turn of the century, there were young men and women all across the United States who knew that cultural experience was a democratic birthright and a universal desire. You can read some of their stories in the fiction of Cather and Dreiser. This generation of true believers crowded into the libraries and the museums and the concert halls that Carnegie and other philanthropists built, and their lives were forever changed. What you discover in Cather's work is that along with artistic illumination could come tangled feelings of regret, dislocation, and loss—for to go to art was to give yourself over to an experience that you loved precisely because it was so far from ordinary life. The social situation has changed enormously since Cather's day, but the otherness of art is still a force to be reckoned with, even if arts organizations do not—and should not—know what to do about it.

In the 1990s, some philanthropies are still building libraries and concert halls and museums, which is good news. The technological developments that you see at the Getty—the computerized information centers adjacent to the museum galleries, and ArtsEdNet, the support system for art teachers that is available on the Web—are in many respects the direct descendants of the educational programs of a hundred years ago. But the expectations that they arouse may be changing. In a Getty publication called *Introduction to Imaging,* published in 1996 to discuss the digital techniques available "to display and link collections from around the world," Howard Besser and Jennifer Trant explain that "the potential of reaching audiences across social and economic boundaries blurs the distinction between the privileged few and the general public." I would have thought that in a democracy any member of the general public is given the opportunity to *become* one of the privileged few. That description of blurring distinctions may not represent official policy at the Getty, but it does sound dangerously like dumbing down. This would not be the first time that the museumgoing public had been sold short.

The Getty Center wears so many hats that it's no wonder that a visitor can come away with impressions of conflict, or at least of contrasting attitudes and styles. Some of these impressions suggest a tension between artistic or scholarly probity and the rabble-rousing unpredictability of the public. But in other instances the unpredictability is that of art itself, which is countered by a scholar's preference—maybe it's really a corporate preference—for logical, quantifiable experiences. Ensor's painting of a Christ-like artist enveloped by the mob comes immediately to mind. So does the sleek and serene travertine complex hovering above the rush hour of the San Diego Freeway. So does the experience of seeing a painting as overwhelming as Rembrandt's *St. Bartholomew* in this icebox of a museum. And with Harold Williams and his perfectionist view of the Getty now being replaced by Barry Munitz, who might just give the Trust a more populist tilt, you have another snapshot that tells the Getty story.

The operating-room sensibility of Richard Meier's architecture is just right for an organization that wants to micromanage every aspect of the public's encounter with art. Is it any surprise that the scholars who have been invited to the Getty Research Institute this year are being asked to reflect on "Representing the Passions"? Those considering life's unruly emotions will do so in a group of state-of-the-art offices located in a chaste building surrounded by lemon and olive trees and some of the most beautiful views in the world. Scholars will also be able to study two small shows of items from the Getty's spectacular research collections, both of which focus on chaotic, unpredictable forces. "Irresistible Decay," about the romance of ruins, is a rather predictable subject. The more interesting show, organized by Kevin Salatino, is devoted to the history of fireworks, and it is winningly entitled "Incendiary Art." Salatino presents image after image in which crowds gather to watch the elabo-

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rately plotted displays that accompanied royal celebrations of births, marriages, and the like, mostly during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These extravaganzas offer the fascination of fire being shaped into art, but in a brilliant catalog Salatino also takes the trouble to point out that the proceedings often fizzled, that the most sophisticated members of the audience were frequently bored.

All art is incendiary: that's the joke. At the Getty they are playing the role of the director in these ancien-régime celebrations, who fences the pyrotechnics off, who tells the public where to stand and what to see. The Getty's Conservation Institute uses the most advanced scientific methods to stop and even to reverse deterioration in works of art; they have major projects underway in Mexico, in Italy, in China. But conservation is also an area of contemporary museological and archeological studies where there are serious conflicts between high-tech solutions that promise to restore objects to a bright-as-the-reproduction glow and mysterious stylistic questions to which a noninvasive, almost leave-it-as-it-is method may be the wisest response.

The Education Institute has spent the past decade taking a hard look at the old art-education-as-self-expression idea. They want to teach school children about traditions and formal systems; they want to show kids how all the elements go together. This is a nationwide program that encourages museumgoing through techniques as simple as bringing high-quality art reproductions into the classroom. So far so good. But here, too, the Getty may be straining to control what cannot be controlled, and to rationalize the experience of art. According to David Perkins (a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education who has written an occasional paper for the Getty), looking at art provides "an excellent setting for the development of better thinking, for the cultivation of what might be called the art of intelligence." Perkins may be passionate about art, but why does he need to sell it as a way of beefing up kids' brains?

At the Getty you see '90s-style cultural philanthropy putting on its best face, and it turns out to be a high-end corporate package with the requisite politically correct frills. Speaking of Richard Meier's buildings, Harold Williams has written that the Getty wanted architecture that would "be timeless and a work of art in itself." There may be no architect in the world who could have delivered something like that; but considering the bureaucratic hell that Meier went through, his failures must be counted as the Getty's failures, too. What Meier's work lacks is heat, an organic flow. He is trying to strategize and prioritize his way to greatness. And so is the Getty.

Meier's buildings are a case of lofty architectural ambitions run amok. Ada Louise Huxtable is right when she describes the architecture as a metaphor, except that what this contemporary acropolis suggests is the futility of totalism, the impossibility of creating an organization that will cover every aspect of a person's experience of art, from childhood education to family museumgoing to post-doctoral studies. Despite its departments-within-a-campus set-up, the result is a juggernaut: the wrong temple in the wrong time in the wrong place. And yet you can still hear the Getty's shamelessly elitist heart beating, even through all the glass and metal and travertine. When you step inside the galleries of the museum, you are in the presence of the old-time religion of art. And more power to it. •

Accurate Gusto

By Richard Poirier

The Selected Letters of Marianne Moore edited by Bonnie Costello, Celeste Goodridge, and Cristanne Miller

(Knopf, 597 pp., $35)

Writing poetry, criticism, or letters of advice, sympathy, and chastisement, several times each day, to her numerous and celebrated friends, matching wits with the formidable mother whom she adored—the only person with whom she ever lived—editing *The Dial* during its great years in the 1920s, rewriting poems submitted by Hart Crane or rejecting a section from a work-in-progress now called *Finnegans Wake*, working as a librarian, attending literary parties night after night in Manhattan, travelling, lecturing, picking up nearly every prestigious award available in her time to an American poet: whatever Marianne Moore chose to do in her long life, from 1887 to 1972, she did it with élan and determined care. In all her actions—writing and reading, she maintained, were forms of action—she unerringly achieved a balance between what she called "gusto" and (another favorite word) "discipline," between an abundance of energy and the self-fashioned rigors of form, between freedom and reticence. In a talk in 1949 entitled "Humility, Concentration, and Gusto," Moore remarks that "gusto thrives on freedom, and freedom in art, as in life, is the result of a discipline imposed by ourselves."

Gusto and discipline are everywhere on display in Moore's letters. Especially in the correspondence from the periods that this book calls "Beginnings: Childhood and the Bryn Mawr Years, 1887-1909," and "Editing *The Dial*: 1925-1929," the letters are extraordinarily long, even after the editors wisely chose, in a few cases, to abridge them from their original 30, 40, even 50 pages. She consumed space with dizzyingly minute descriptions of apartments and buildings, down to addresses and how best to get there; of city and country landscapes, rare plants, animals, and fish, the personal attire of people she meets; of the articles on a cluttered table, and plays and operas and dinner menus, and the back and forth of smart conversations.

Very little of this is meant to be comic, though it reads at times like those moments in Jane Austen, when, to show the boredom of country life, she satirizes conversations on the weather or on the proper consistency of really good gruel, or like Eudora Welty's superbly sad and funny story "Why I Live at the P.O.," given over to the ruminations of a paranoid woman who prefers to be alone rather than endure family conversations. Though justly famous for her wit, Moore isn't given to comedy at her own expense. Readers who patiently plough through these descriptive thickets will better understand why the editors seem occasionally to nod off when an explanatory note comes due. The notes, the glossaries of names, and the introductions to the eight sections of the book are helpful and lucidly written, but a good encyclopedia should be kept handy by those who want to track down

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the names of exotic plants or animals, of baseball players, politicians, writers, literary characters, and the like.

The pile-up of detail in some of Moore's writing works to the advantage of certain of the poems, if not to some of the letters, and it was a feature of the poetry admired by Elizabeth Bishop. Bishop was sent to meet Moore in 1934 by the librarian at Bryn Mawr, where she was a student. The two struck it off immediately when the young woman invited the distinguished older one to go with her to the circus. Soon Bishop began sending drafts of her early poems to Moore and her mother for comment, and sometimes for correction and revision. It was a practice that she gradually discontinued, especially after the Moores objected in 1940 to Bishop's use in her poem "Roosters" of the expression "water closets," and to other "sordidities," as Bishop superciliously called them.

In an interview in 1966, Bishop speaks positively of Moore's descriptive zeal as an aspect of an instinctive democratic feeling. She compares Moore in this respect to John Dewey, whose daughter was then a close friend of Bishop and whose pragmatist writings Moore had read as far back as 1917, copying out passages that she admired. Both Dewey and Moore, despite the complexities of their writings, had a rare capacity among literary intellectuals, Bishop observed, to "talk to everyone, on all social levels, without the slightest change in their manner of speaking," with a kind of instinctive respect. And both, she adds, "loved little things, small plants and weeds and animals."

Bishop could have had in mind Dewey's belief, evidenced no less by Moore in some of her 40 poems about animals, that "to grasp the sources of aesthetic experience it is necessary to have recourse to animal life below the human scale," to "the activities of the fox, the dog, and the thrush," and his appreciative comments on "the tense grace of the ball-player." In her poem "Baseball and Writing," she, too, makes watching a ballgame little different from the experience of writing or reading a poem. In sports, in the instinctive grace and measure of animal movements, no less than in the choreographed movements that she admired in a dancer such as Arthur Mitchell of the New York City Ballet—a dancer who can at once, as she puts it in a poem about him, "reveal/and veil/a peacock tail"—Moore found confirmation of her commitment to restraint not as a limit so much as an incentive to exemplary forms of extravagance.

Moore's fascination with baseball emerges early, in the baseball lingo in letters from Bryn Mawr to her brother, and it intensifies with the years. Her enthusiastic review in 1961 of *Out of My League* by George Plimpton, with whom she became friends and attended ballgames and prizefights, was followed by an article in 1968 on the local library, where she expresses her admiration for the great New York Giants pitcher Christy Mathewson. In the early '20s, on visits to the Hudson Park Children's Room, she liked to recommend his book, *Pitching in a Pinch*, to the boys. The poem "Baseball and Writing," written in 1961, has resemblances to Frost's earlier poem "Two Tramps in Mud Time," where the wood-chopping poet, under the envious gaze of tramps who covet the job for wages, tells himself that it is his duty as a poet, even during the Depression, to "play / With what was another man's work for gain." He reasons that the physical sensation of woodcutting is akin to the sensation that goes into the activity of poetic creation, and that he is thereby able to "unite/My avocation and my vocation."

When Moore refers to Frost in her letters, she sounds more distantly admiring than she does of Stevens, Eliot, Auden, and Williams, with whom she more frequently corresponded. But she is undeviatingly reverential about him, and immensely appreciative of whatever attentions he paid her. Writing to Bishop in 1956, she is delighted to report that in James Merrill's introduction of her at Amherst College "I was compared with Robert Frost," the poet who wrote that "the work is play for mortal stakes." Though she nowhere compares (as he does) the bodily movements of sexual intercourse to "the figure a poem makes," Moore is as determined as Frost to find analogies for the work of poetic creation in all kinds of other movements, human, animal, or botanical. In her poem "Nevertheless," she praises the sap struggling to fulfill itself as it works its way through a final "little thread," not just to make a cherry but "to make the cherry red." Like Frost—and like Dewey—she is less interested in production as a form of perpetuation than as a form of enhancement, of excess, of aesthetic excitation, spirit, and tenacity.

Moore's writing, in her poems or in her letters and essays, is a celebration of those who have the discipline required to shape this excess of energy into any form of play, including poetry. The virtue of formal play—baseball, poetry, dance—is that it can be made publicly available to others, perhaps inducing in them some comparable degree of discipline and caring. Thus, in a poem entitled "Hometown Piece for Messrs. Alston and Reese," the latter better known as Pee Wee Reese, she says of the man-

MARIANNE MOORE BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

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ager and captain of the Dodgers: "Zest./ They've zest. 'Hope springs eternal in the Brooklyn breast.' " After remarking in an essay in 1966 that "writing is a fascinating business," she goes on to quote Faulkner: "'And what should it do?' William Faulkner asked. 'It should help a man endure by lifting up his heart.' (Admitting that his might not always have done that.) It *should*."

It is evident from the difficulties posed by Moore's own poetry that the way in which art or writing or other shaped activities might "lift up the heart" is not by exhortation or by inspirational anecdote. It is by the artist's or athlete's performance, the aesthetic excitements called forth by intricate displays of human creative prowess. Thus, in a review in 1933 of the letters of Emily Dickinson, Moore could easily be talking about herself, when she writes:

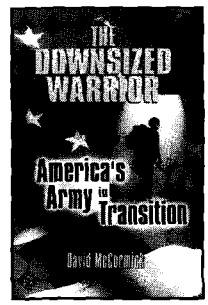
> Against near rhyme or no rhyme where rhyme is required, complaint seems general. But Emily Dickinson was a person of power and could have overcome had she wished to, any less than satisfactory feature of her lines.... To some her Japanesely fantastic reverence for tree, insect, and toadstool is not interesting; many who are "helped" by a brave note, do not admire the plucked string; by some the note of rapture is not caught; and by the self-sufficient, Emily Dickinson has been accused of vanity. A certain buoyance that creates an effect of inconsequent bravado—a sense of drama with which we might not be quite at home—was for her a part of that expansion of breath necessary to existence, and unless it is conceited for the hummingbird or the osprey to not behave like a chicken, one does not find her conceited.

A bit further on she praises Dickinson for her capacity to "attain splendor of implication without prefatory statement, for her conciseness was an extreme of her largesse." Thirty years later, "conciseness" is a virtue that she ascribes to Cassius Clay on the dust jacket of his *I Am the Greatest*: "He is a master of concision. Asked, 'Have you ever been in love,' he says 'Not with anyone else.'" Matching his own high spirits she remarks that "He is literary—in the tradition of Sir Philip Sidney, defender of Poesie.... He fights as he writes. Is there something I have missed? He is a smiling pugilist."

Moore's unlikely mention of Sidney is an acknowledgment that for centuries some of the most artistically venturesome writers have claimed that their work with language required something like the prowess, skill, discipline, and fortitude of athletes and warriors. Wordsworth remarked in 1815 that the poet of genius "will be called upon to clear and often to shape his own road: he will be in the condition of Hannibal among the Alps." The reader must therefore be correspondingly inspirited, and cannot expect "to be carried like a dead weight." Frost, who pitched softball in high school and well into his 70s, was invited to write in 1956 on an All-Star Game by *Sports Illustrated*, and in a piece called "Perfect Day—A Day of Prowess," he wrote that "Prowess of course comes first, the ability to perform with success in games, in the arts and, come right down to it, in battle. The nearest kin to the artists in college ... are their fellow performers in baseball, football and tennis." And he says of his dear friend, the Welsh poet Edward Thomas, killed in the last moments of World War I, that he had "come to look on a poem as a performance one had to win."

Hemingway and Mailer are obvious additions to any little anthology of writers as would-be athletes, on the page and off. In a letter of February 5, 1965, Moore reports that she sat next to Mailer at Toots Shor's, where she had been taken by George Plimpton after the Patterson-Chuvalo fight at Madison Square Garden. "I liked Norman Mailer immensely," she writes to her brother, "and on getting home read his article in the Jan 31 *Times*: 'Cities Higher than Mountains'—in which he says 'Man is always engaging the heavens. Now the jungle is replaced by a prison.' Really ingenious article. He lives at 128 Willow. George P. is always alluding to him. I now see a reason."

Wallace Stevens, who seldom revealed any interest in sports, except for sailing, and made the mistake in Key West of drunkenly picking a fistfight with Hemingway in which he broke a hand and was knocked down, was nonetheless intent, as in the epilogue to "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," on comparing the poet with the soldier fighting in World War II: "Soldier, there is a war between the mind / And sky...." This war is the endless war fought by the poet against already determined forms of reality. It is a war, he concedes to the soldier, that "depends on yours." For the Stevens of "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words," the lecture that he delivered the year after the United States entered World War II, poetry represents "a violence from within that protects us from a violence from without. It is the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality." Moore had a devoted if complicated regard for Stevens, reviewing brilliantly and at length all but one of his volumes. He in turn wrote two lengthy essays on her and trusted her to make



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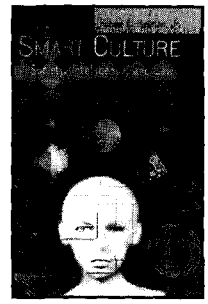

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the choices for the publication in England of a collection of his selected poems. Writing to Winifred Bryher in 1935, she speaks of "all my efforts in writing criticism and in writing verse having been for years, a chameleon attempt to bring my product into some sort of compatibility with Wallace Stevens."

Moore's reticence is so instinctive, her endorsements so tentative, that even in the relatively free form of her letters, no less than in her poems and her critical writings, there is apt to intrude, just as she seems to be surrendering to an enthusiasm, a word or a phrase of quiet curtailment. Thus, after her praise of Mailer in the letter to her brother, she says she now sees "a" reason (only one?) why George Plimpton so frequently alludes to him. Emily Dickinson is described as a "person" of power, raising the question of why she isn't called, by another woman poet, a woman of power. Similarly, her apparently ever-varying or ever-modified ("chameleon") attempts at achieving some similarity to the work of Stevens are at most aimed, in her words, only toward "some sort" of similarity. The elegantly scrupulous inflections of her language—which make her longest poem "Marriage" into a wonderful riddle on the subject—nearly always point to something important to be discovered only by a reader's close inquisitiveness.

Moore's carefully measured sense of her compatibility with Stevens turns out to be of considerable importance to our understanding of both of them. Her restraint has little to do with evidence in other letters that she sometimes felt mystified by him, as any friend sometimes can be by another. To William Carlos Williams, in November 1944, she writes: "Wallace Stevens is beyond fathoming, he is so strange; it is as if he had a morbid secret he would rather perish than disclose and just as he tells it out in his sleep, he changes to an uncontradictable judiciary with a gown and a gavel and you are embarrassed to have heard anything." In a correspondence that lasted some 35 years, she continued calling him "Mr. Stevens" in her salutations even after he, in March 1953, momentarily relented and addressed her as Marianne.

Stevens always remained the contemporary poet whom Moore most admired—for what, in her first review of him, when *Harmonium* appeared in 1923, she called his "accurate gusto," and because, as she said in 1937 of later poems, "they embody hope that in being frustrated becomes fortitude." And yet her poetry is distinctly and tellingly different from his, and she knew it. The persistent celebratory thrust of her poetry is not importantly conditioned, as his often is, by intervals of any perceived threat to it, aside from the incontestable fact that life is inherently dangerous, as suggested in her poem of 1932 called "The Steeple-Jack," one of her best. It is a poem in which she seems to endorse the town's complacently idyllic view of itself. And yet, as in the last stanza, she gently qualifies her endorsements, so gently as to suggest that the town could not bear any less delicate reminders that no place is immune to the perils of human existence. The ending seems to affirm the presence of dangers even as it denies them. Why else must the church steeple carry so visible a reminder of the need for hope?

> It could not be dangerous to be living
> in a town like this of simple people,
> Who have a steeple-jack placing
> danger-signs by the church
> While he is gliding the solid-
> pointed star, which on a steeple
> stands for hope.

Moore was acutely responsive to historical tragedies—the Second World War, the Depression of the 1930s, economic dislocations, racial injustice at home, the horrors of anti-Semitism in Europe. Yet she exhibits nothing like Stevens's persistent sense of the threat to poetic creativity that comes from imaginative desolation, from imaginative (and sexual) impotence. There are in her poetry no Frostean desert places. She does not think with Stevens's mind of winter. The affirmative, optative mood of nearly all of her writings already assumes the facts of mortality and that "life," as William James puts it, "*feels* like a real fight," a fight in which it is well to accept the fact that there will be real winners and real losers.

These inevitabilities, for Moore, are welcome incentives to scrappiness, discipline, and creativity, to "song" itself, as she suggests it in her poem "What Are Years?":

> The very bird,
> grown taller as he sings, steels
> his form straight up. Though he is
> captive,
> his mighty singing
> says, satisfaction is a lowly
> thing, how pure a thing is joy.
> This is mortality,
> This is eternity.

In thousands of letters written over a period of 64 years, from 1905, when she entered Bryn Mawr, to 1969, after an incapacitating stroke that led to her death three years later, there will inevitably be a few confessions to private depression. But they are amazingly few and far between, at least in this ample selection, for a woman who worked exceptionally hard, cultivated a number of difficult and troubled friends, and was never known to have had a single romantic or sexual or even very exclusive relationship with anyone other than her mother.

Her mother was her closest friend and confidant, a brilliantly cultivated, laconic, vigorously moral woman, the daughter of a Presbyterian pastor, in whose house Marianne was born. Her mother in the interval, and already with an infant son, had separated, for the rest of her life as it turned out, from her husband. He had lost what fortune he had in speculation, and with it, at least temporarily, his mental stability. Marianne was never to meet her father. The mother, who shared in many of Moore's literary and personal friendships, was also pointed and original of speech, and her aphoristic phrasings can be heard in some of her daughter's poems. She died in 1947, at the age of 85, after a succession of illnesses during which she was cared for mostly by Marianne, who often fell ill herself from exhaustion. It was the greatest loss in Moore's life, and it was not alleviated by the succession of honors lavished upon her in the years close to it: the Shelley Award, the Harriet Monroe Poetry Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship, election in the year of her mother's death to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and, between 1951 and 1953, the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, and the Bollingen Prize.

In this period of exceptional private loss and exceptional public acclaim, Moore wrote an uncharacteristically distressed letter to Ezra Pound, to whom she was always trustingly direct in her dealings, especially in her criticisms of his politics, though she was herself a Hoover Republican all her life. At the time of her writing, Pound was confined to St. Elizabeth's Hospital, exposed to the kinds of trouble she herself was experiencing. In July 1946, she writes:

> I sound dull because I *am* dull. You know our propensity for illness; the gloom of which you helped dissipate by visiting our infirmary. This time it is hard. My mother is having a battle to eat; or rather swallow (because of an injury to the nerve controlling the palate). I have been telling people I cannot write letters or even receive them; but we think of you, Ezra, and wish you could be comfortable. Don't be embittered. Embitterment is a sin—a subject on which I am an authority.

If, somehow, she had become an au-

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thority on the sin of embitterment, it was not for reasons deducible from any but three or four of these letters, or from her other published writings, or from the reports of her friends, or from the fine account of her life in Charles Molesworth's biography. She scarcely ever complains about financial problems beyond those of other people during the Depression, though her own difficulties may be inferred from her letters of thanks to her brother and to Winifred Bryher, H. D.'s very wealthy and generous companion, for gifts of money. Far from feeling aggrieved about her literary standing, the letters reveal a reluctance to allow the first book publication of poems already printed in periodicals. They didn't by then seem to her to represent the best she would do. The publication was arranged, nonetheless, by H.D. and Bryher.

There is no evidence either that Moore felt any so-called anxiety of influence with respect to poets past or present. She was cheerfully candid about the exceptions she took to poets she knew, and she knew nearly all the best-known ones, especially so when it came to Williams, and to the critic (and her fellow editor of *The Dial*) Kenneth Burke, who reportedly called her one of the sexiest women he ever met, and to Stevens, Crane, Cummings, and her dear friend Bishop. These criticisms focused mostly on the use in their work of language that she or her mother considered tasteless or obscene.

It was on that score, it would seem, that Williams once said that "I am in perfect terror of Marianne," whose association with him and his family was all the while affectionate on both sides. Just how formidable Moore could become on the subject of the off-color is apparent in her brilliantly rendered account, in a letter in 1923 to her brother, of a conversation with the American poet-critic Matthew Josephson. It is the kind of letter that makes one hope to see at least part of the novel on which she worked for years but for which she could never find a publisher. In her salutation she addresses her brother as "Badger," and calls her mother (to whom she also occasionally referred as "he") "Mole," and herself, signing off, "Rat," these being among the pet names they used with one another, some of them drawn from their mutual appreciation of characters in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*:

Dear Badger,

•

...Mole described somewhat our conversation with M[atthew] Josephson and it was

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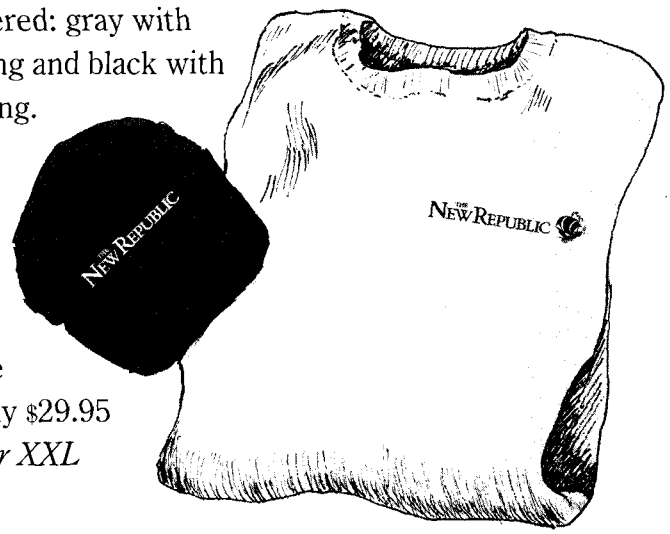

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Real Time

... where Hiroshima was, there's a little star, someone said,
and I saw this star, like spit on the sidewalk
... and there's a quiet inlet of oaks,
someone said, a brazen light,
and a perpetual return, another promised,
and someone was always having a bad time of it,
grim forecasts and the heart worn down,
punched-in shops on the highway where we bought beer
and that spring we argued all night,
night after night, and couldn't save the marriage, all that
someone said, will be replaced
like a city replaced by a meadow
and replaced by a city again, and the little shudder
I got thinking of absent time,
or time without us in it,
and how, sometimes, a friend said, any thought of another
is godlike, is grace, and I read somewhere
about how tired explorers get just before they reach their goal,
about various sea weeds, movies shown in the open air,
about a river pressing in among the trees, and someone said
we all wish to publish manifestos,
and in the decline of summer that year
translations of old ideas appeared like new
and someone nearly hysterical claimed
he never heard the announcement, and couldn't get out of the way.

CHARLIE SMITH

an ordeal. He said at one point of the salvos, "well, I hope we can still be friends." "Surely one's interest in human beings" I said "transcends a difference in tastes." Previous to this, he had said that abroad nobody "studies over" obscenity: that grossness and sensuality were part of life, one didn't make a point of it or avoid it, it was just there like the trees on the street and he thought if I had lived abroad I would have a different feeling about it. I said, "I'm afraid not and what makes me sure I wouldn't is that none of the writers who write the fiction & poems you speak of ever discuss face to face with me any of the questionable matters that they write about. Mr. Burke when I am talking with him never borders upon a discussion of any of the details I object to in his writing because he would be embarrassed." He said, "that is a point I have raised myself in my own mind, but" etc. I said, "Shakespeare exhilarates me; These writers don't. When a piece of work focusses attention so strongly upon his grossness or its funniness that you can think of nothing else then all question of the writer's potential greatness disappears; he's not an artist, & signifies only as [a] moral problem." More of this and at length he said "Then I wonder what you think of my book—if you've troubled to read it." I said of course I had read it & there was much I didn't like—much that I felt was unconscious & instinctive, not meant aggressively but that I deplored & felt was reflected from the society that perhaps he had happened to be in. He looked downcast & somewhat slyly defiant and then I said I liked 2 of his poems in which I felt that he escaped from impinging influences when I hadn't the feeling that he was writing with a view of the thing's being read by Gorham Munson & Slater Brown & James Joyce & Scofield Thayer. We laughed outright but he was displeased & we had a real carnage of skin & fur for 2 hours or more. Words couldn't do justice to the revolting inanity of it & as I said to Mole, the man's limitations which should enlist one's pity merely alienate me. However he will be here again & on that occasion I shall ignore the existence of offal & smelly fishheads and treat him as if he were a little mister in society & thus eventually fly away from him.

With love,
Rat

Absent from Moore's own writing are any of those "questionable matters" that she objects to in the writing of her friends and many others. Absent, too, especially from the correspondence, where it might be expected, are evidences of whatever sexual feelings that she might have harbored. Even the highlighting of human physical attributes that might offer some clue to any such feeling isn't to be found and isn't inferable from her metaphors. This is, for me, an imaginative limitation in her poetry. It constitutes a failure in her habitual "gusto." It is a likely cause of why so much of that "gusto" asserts itself in overstrenuous technical ingenuities and in a descriptive voraciousness that finds everything to its satisfaction except the human body in its intimate relations with other human bodies.

It is this extraordinary avoidance of the sexual, even in the long poem called "Marriage," that ought to call particular attention to two letters written from Bryn Mawr when Moore was 20, letters that the editors have commendably made available, but without any comment. The letters are remarkable because they reveal her intense, almost self-shattering sexual feelings for young women, a crisis in her life that her interpreters, so far as I can discover, have never noted or discussed. More, they show that Moore's recognition of these feelings causes in her an intensity of depression not to be found again in these letters until the final illness of her mother.

The letters are addressed to Marcet Haldeman, a classmate at Bryn Mawr who was off campus for the semester. At the end of January 1908, when Moore was 20, she confesses that "I have lost my heart to Frances Stewart and call her my lady-love." Two weeks later, in another letter to Marcet, she describes a most marvelous sunset witnessed alone with Frances from the roof of a college building. In her account of this moment of shared enthusiasm, Moore confesses that "I could have kissed her." She also refers in this letter to another college friend, Peggy James, daughter of the philosopher William: "I get nervous as a horse though when [I] get to touching certain parts of her," she writes, adding:

> I don't believe she has "understanding" or the shadow of it. Alas some deficiencies do not however keep one from being a Circe, if the instinct to please, and a gentle, feeling aspect and a mind over which passions show color as they run, are present. I hate to make Peggy an *objet d'art* and it is her fault that I do—but if she *can* not acknowledge me a man without giving me a black, she *can*not.

It is a bit earlier in this same letter that Moore makes one of her very rare admissions of depression:

> I am sorry you have to think upon my Sunday's broken growl of anguish. I don't mind your knowing that I slip into a black frenzy occasionally but I insult your understanding by *retailing* you the mess of it, and not taking for granted that I have your sympathy unconsciously whether or not I say I need it and why.

Here, much as in the letter to Pound 40 years later during her mother's illness, Moore's famous reticence comes

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into play. Here, too, she hastens to assure her correspondent, who is apparently already familiar with the problems that Moore is experiencing, that she won't burden her with details. And she goes on, as she will when warning Pound and herself against the sin of embitterment, to declare her resolve to master her depressions:

> Silvia—where is Silvia? in all this. At the bottom of it I fear. She will not do. She cannot reach. I feel like molten lead inside once and a while. It's terrible to the place where you feel. Sampson! wake up. You stand trying to conjure up for yourself a phantom Delilah. Dig your poor sensitive mortal's foot into the earth and *run* with yourself till you are a *man*.

This is troubled prose, and it is likely that Moore wasn't herself wholly in control of its implications. It is clear, though, that Silvia is not a reference to yet another student with whom Moore, at least in her own mind, is involved in an intense and unrewarding romantic relationship. Throughout her correspondence she refers to literary and mythological figures as casually as she might to close acquaintances, with no attendant explanations. In this letter she can count on someone with whom she has taken classes to recognize Silvia as the much courted young heroine in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*: "Who is Silvia? what is she,/ That all our swains commend her?" Even more, Moore would likely be referring to some less famous lines a bit earlier in the play: "Except I be by Silvia in the night,/ There is no music in the nightingale." Moore had already published some of her poems in the Bryn Mawr magazine *Tipyn O'Bob*, and in her very next letter to Marcet, in the context of much talk of the need for "courage," and for being "master of your fate," she announces, and not for the first time, that "I have come to the conclusion that I want to write." That she intended to become nothing less than a great writer is suggested in a letter close by to her mother and brother: "Writing is all I care for, or for what I care most, and writing is such a puling profession, if it is not a great one, that I occasionally give up."

So that even as her allusion to Silvia momentarily evokes the nightingale, a traditional figure for poetic song, and with it the notion that perhaps one needs a Silvia in one's arms to be inspired to song, it is this same idea that Moore immediately banishes. Such a romantic hope for an idealized Peggy or Frances "will not do. She cannot reach." Instead, Moore will go it alone, "*run* with yourself till you are a *man*." Indeed, to become a "man" in the form implied here requires that she not ask someone such as Peggy "to acknowledge me a man," that is, as the substitute for a male lover. She seems to have held to this decision, even as she found close friendships and comfort with women all through her life thereafter, with Elizabeth Bishop, Hilda Doolittle, and Katherine Jones, whose various lady-loves also became good friends, and who made her comfortable in their homes, and even babied her, on some of the few vacations she took.

What, then, or who, is this "man" she is determined to become by running "alone"? It is the same man, I would argue, called into being by two great women writers of whom Moore wrote most appreciatively, Emily Dickinson and Gertrude Stein. Stein goes so far as to propose, through the play of her language, that her genitalia are the full equivalent of a male phallus, and in the little poem "Essential Oils are Wrung," Dickinson makes clear her intention to be the equal of any illustrious male poet with a pun on "sun": "The attar of the Rose/Be not expressed by Suns—alone." In such a light, one can better appreciate why Moore refers to Dickinson not as "a woman" but as "a person of power." She means to suggest that Dickinson is a full equal, not a tolerated exception, in the nearly exclusively male line of great poets. She is a full inheritor, and if she will not join in the line of sexual reproduction of the race, she will hold a leading place, as Stein intends to do, in the exalted line of cultural reproduction, destined to be inherited by future generations.

It is a thrilling moment in Moore's letters, like Stephen Dedalus's walk on the beach, written at the very beginning of her career. Its implications, again, have gone unnoticed, and it calls for the kind of attention that the publication of these letters ought to excite. Meanwhile Moore can be believed when, in a letter to William Carlos Williams in 1952, she alludes to "my case," and immediately adds, "disregarding gender—something I have always done."

RICHARD POIRIER is the editor of *Raritan Quarterly* at Rutgers and chairman of the board of the Library of America.

Lookism

BY LAWRENCE LIPKING

Hogarth: A Life and a World by Jenny Uglow

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 794 pp., $45)

Hogarth and his Times by David Bindman

(University of California Press, 208 pp., $45)

Spending time in Hogarth's world is a lot like visiting Calcutta. Not every tourist feels comfortable there, of course. In the corners, amid the hubbub and the squalor and the waste, the eye catches sight of crying children whom no one seems to be looking after, or dressed-up monkeys whose grimaces mock their human look-alikes. It is hard to keep any perspective. Even the field of vision can be deeply unsettling: things break or spill out of containers, walls tilt and totter, hands from the background poke into the foreground, and words protrude from a litter of signs, as if to distract onlookers while an accomplice goes around quietly picking their pockets. And then there are the bodies. You cannot ignore them: flesh in all shapes and sizes squats on the curb, peeps out of tattered clothing, blocks the light, crowds out room to breathe. No one has airbrushed this picture; the ordinary freakishness of human beings is in your face.

Yet any lover of cities will love being here. There is so much to see—more than anyone could ever take in. In constant motion, people walk the streets with the tools of their trades, fill the air with music and spices and chatter and prayer, hawk news, bring traffic crashing to a halt, bargain, solicit, scrounge, get drunk or high, watch out for an angle, meditate, swarm around scaffolds, harangue the passer-by with politics or poetry, greet friends, disappear into

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doorways, quarrel, embrace, fall down, or generally stick their noses into everyone's business. What could be more urbane? Nor would anyone want to miss the flashes of astonishing beauty—expressions of pure innocence and joy, or the sinuous curve of someone who knows how to move.

Jenny Uglow loves Hogarth's London as well as the artist himself. An exuberant guide, she walks the reader through the city step by step, amused and at ease in this world, and ready to dally at a shop window or gape at a fireworks show. The pleasure of looking is everywhere in this book. Uglow responds most of all to pictures such as *The Shrimp Girl*, painted sometime in the 1740s, "a moment caught on the wing," and she is a virtuoso at finding words for the glow of life that shines through the strokes of art. "As if the girl were moving fast towards us, her wicker platter of shrimps with its carefully balanced measuring jug cuts right across and out of the frame, its latticework painted so fast that Hogarth's brush has rushed down on to her green hat beneath.... Framed by her hat, with its loose white ribbons, her hair curling freely beneath its brim, she glances quickly sideways and grins at a joke, or a compliment no one will hear." This is the special poignance of cities, that unforgettable face in the crowd, so suddenly vital, so suddenly gone. No one has brought us closer than Uglow to Hogarth's unstable world.

But looking at these cityscapes can be frustrating, too. As soon as you start to look, you become involved. An outsider walking the streets of Calcutta attracts attention, and quickly the press of bodies and goods for sale and thrusting hands closes off the view, except for glimpses from the limousine or hotel window. Too much is going on for any sightseer to make sense of it. And moral queasiness also interferes with a cool, dispassionate point of view. It seems that the scene at which you gaze wants something from you, something perhaps beyond your power to give. Looking cannot be neutral, in this world.

What Hogarth's pictures want from a viewer is also open to question. A host of admirers have certainly found them involving. Offended at being labeled a caricaturist, Hogarth preferred to think of himself as "a comic history-painter" (in Fielding's phrase) who created Modern Moral Subjects. The downfall of a harlot, a rake, or an idle apprentice was no mere entertainment; in the way of classical satire, it would serve to instruct and reform. Thus Hogarth represents the conscience of his age. According to sympathetic critics, including Swift, Fielding, and Sterne, he shows us vice to help us to be good.

Meanwhile there is plenty of vice to look at. From the beginning, the Modern Moral Subjects have attracted commentators to explain their many fine points, the wealth of significant tiny details that stuff the picture with meaning. A first glance is often deceptive. To the casual eye, the bacchanalians of *A Midnight Modern Conversation* might seem to have reached a blissful state of fuddlement, where someone can fall on the floor without getting hurt. These drunks are disgusting, no doubt, but many a thirsty viewer would willingly join the party. Yet a closer look brings out the full repulsiveness of each individual figure. The fallen officer's bald head, on which wine is being spilled, bears scars of pox as well as battle, and urine as well as wine soaks the floor beneath him. Above, at his former place at the table, a tobacco wrapper is labeled "Freeman's Best." The irony encompasses the proudest boast of Englishmen, their right to behave as they wish. In that case, it may be the nation itself that is falling. This ring of sots is really a vicious circle.

Rewarded by such discoveries, the appetite grows for seeing more and more. Even the title of the print seems teasing. Plainly enough, this stupefied and incoherent group can only mock the possibility of conversation. But what about "midnight"? The hands of a clock on the wall point to four, and morning sun has filtered into the room; at the very center, a flask reflects a square of barred light through a window. This mystery cannot be unintentional. Evidently we are supposed to look deeper.

Sixty years later, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg provided a solution to the puzzle.

> The explanation is this: in England, by which we understand for the most part London, they keep time by the sun as in the rest of the world, and set their clocks accordingly. But in addition there is another entirely different sort of time; one might call it the wrong-time, and that is the time by which the population really lives.... Thus Hogarth means to say that in the year 1745 [it was actually 1733], when this engraving appeared, the true sun was four hours in advance of the sun of the wrong-time. At four o'clock in the afternoon it was mid-day, and thus at four o'clock in the morning midnight. Since that date, the two suns have moved farther apart still.

Courtesy, University of California Press

HOGARTH, *A MIDNIGHT MODERN CONVERSATION*, 1733

Lichtenberg's explanation links social and moral codes, especially in the ambiguous phrase "wrong-time." The habits of Englishmen do not obey the natural times of day; they dine at odd hours, and some of them drink through the night and go to bed in the morning. Thus even the clock is an ironist, in this ingenious reading: it points to a fatal disaccord between the truth of the sun and the skewed rhythms by which the revelers live.

By the time he has finished looking, however, the interpreter decides that the angles of light are far too extreme for four o'clock in the morning.

> It may be that Hogarth wanted to show by this that according to the sun it was ten o'clock. At least that would be just in his manner, and expressed completely in the language of which he was master, and where he is so much more difficult to understand than even in his most complex heads. Thus the clock shows neither true time nor wrong-time, just as with human beings. And how could a clock possibly be right in a room where so many people have assembled whose ways are so wrong?

Lichtenberg was not only a distinguished scientist but also a dedicated moralist, who intended his lessons from Hogarth to improve the modern German bour-

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geoisie. Yet he himself recognized a fanatical strain in his readings. "One of the most remarkable traits of my character is a curious superstition which makes everything into an omen and interprets hundreds of things every day as oracles. Every creeping of an insect serves me as the answer to a question about my fate." Hogarth's prints encourage such divinations. Each spot of light, each speck that looms through shadows in the background, might signify yet one more bright idea. Perhaps what this art teaches best is not morality, but the seductiveness and the titillation of looking.

Later commentators inherit that fascination. Voluptuaries of interpretation, those who are seized by Hogarthomania burn to collect not only every variant of a print, but also every innuendo. Hogarth appeals as much, if not more, to experts in literature as to experts in art. Like Blake, who contended that "As Poetry admits not a Letter that is Insignificant, so Painting admits not a Grain of Sand or a Blade of Grass Insignificant—much less an Insignificant Blur or Mark," Hogarth tests our powers of eyesight as well as imagination. Reproductions are almost always disappointing, because they obscure too many details. (A reader who wants to see the fine print should consult Sean Shesgreen's roomy, affordable edition of *Engravings by Hogarth.*)

But what makes these traces matter is not their visual charm, but their hints of ulterior purpose. It is no accident that Ronald Paulson, the foremost Hogarth scholar of modern times, should be a professor of English, or that he should be so often accused of strained interpretations. The common sense of common viewers cannot settle the limits of what can be seen. First of all, understanding the paintings and the prints requires minute historical information; not even Hogarth's contemporaries caught all his references to people and things in the news, let alone his allusions to earlier works of art. But Paulson goes further. Like Lichtenberg, who was not at all embarrassed by his predilection for reading more into a picture than might be there, he overreads on principle. At worst, the stretch for more than meets the eye provides the mind with healthy exercise; at best, it might just bring a new supply of meanings into the world.

Yet the real antagonist of Hogarthomania is not the common viewer. It is the connoisseur. Hogarth spent his life warring with people of taste, especially those who professed to swoon over foreign ideals of beauty instead of paying attention to nature and to England, and the battles have not ended yet. His main complaint was that they did not look. The educated "eye" most treasured by the connoisseur takes in its quarry—that is, the art object—at a glance; it does not lose itself in grains of sand or spots of subject matter. *In Looking at Pictures* (1960), Kenneth Clark emphasized how much a connoisseur could appreciate in the blink of an eye. "First, I see the picture as a whole, and long before I can recognise the subject I am conscious of a general impression, which depends on the relationship of tone and area, shape and colour. This impact is immediate, and I can truthfully say that I would experience it on a bus going at thirty miles an hour if a great picture were in a shop window." That works out to less than a second. Of course, Clark does not recommend snap judgments to the novice, whom he advises to keep circling back; but neither does he approve of absorbing oneself in the subject. Connoisseurship returns to the "pure aesthetic sensation," an effect that need not trifle with questions about what the picture means or intends to say.

This attitude infuriated Hogarth. It elevated the general above the particular, aristocratic refinement above an honest spirit of inquiry, the smoke of time above the light of day, the theories of eloquent amateurs above the professional knowledge of craftsmen who understand how art is made. In the eighteenth century, when taste was often thought to be a consequence of virtue, the connoisseur might even claim that his intuitive eye was morally superior.

Most of all, though, the issue was money. Hogarth's father, a writer and a teacher, had moldered in prison for debt, and "the cruel treatment he met with from Bookseller and Printers particularly in the affairs of a lattin Dictionary the compiling had been work of some years" (it never was published) made his son resolve to be independent of dealers in art. The high prices lavished on continental old masters—often fusty, if not actually fake—were a constant source of aggravation. Then as now, accredited eyes had a lock on the market for art. In the first plate of *Marriage A-la-Mode* (1745), expensive, disastrous paintings cloud the walls and the ceiling of the Earl of Squanderfield's house, and through the window we see his new insipid Palladian mansion rising. The money might as well be thrown away. Hence Hogarth's challenges to classical and academic standards, as well as his attempts to sell directly to the public, try to hit the arbiters of taste at their most sensitive point: right in the pocket.

The results of this struggle were mixed. Once he got started, Hogarth certainly never came near any debtor's prison. He made a good living from selling his prints and paintings, cashed in on whatever scandal most needed exposing, enjoyed a vogue as a portraitist, and finally landed the profitable if not especially exalted post of Serjeant-Painter to the King, succeeding his father-in-law and his brother-in-law. But he never did beat the academicians at their own game; they still got the best commissions. Opinion has long been divided about the merits of Hogarth's grand manner of history painting (no one ever doubted his flair for storytelling and satire). In his own time, the connoisseurs had their way; the works on which he labored longest did not sell.

Late in his life he may even have thought that his career had been a failure. In 1749, a bold image stands as the frontispiece to Hogarth's collected prints: an engraving of his famous self, *Self-Portrait with Pug.* The cocky artist, informally dressed for work, stares at us

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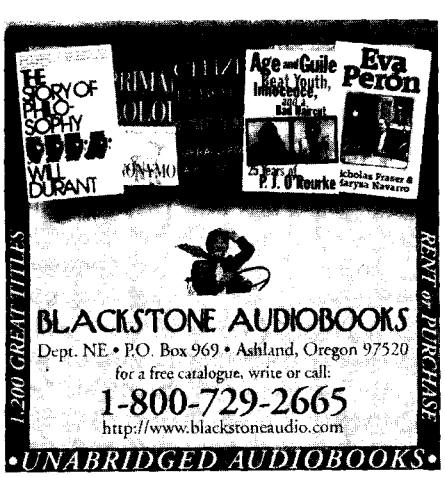

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out of an oval painting that rests on volumes of Shakespeare, Milton, and Swift, beside a palette inscribed with "The Line of Beauty." This human pug is revolutionizing ideas of beauty, and he already belongs to the immortal line of true English art. Yet 14 years later, shortly before his death, scourged by the attacks of John Wilkes and Charles Churchill, he scraped his portrait out of the plate and substituted *The Bruiser*, or Churchill in the guise of a bear. (The dog is now pissing on "An Epistle to Hogarth.") It is as if revenge had consumed the painter along with his art.

Still, Hogarth has been coming back ever since. Whatever his own definition of success may have been, however much he may have wanted approval from those in power, he has the look of a hero of popular culture. In *Hogarth and his Times*, the catalogue of the recent exhibition at the British Museum, David Bindman argues that there is no justification for glorifying Hogarth "as a champion of 'the people' in opposition to reactionary forces," or as "'a man of the people' instinctively on the side of the underdog against those of wealth and rank." Instead the exhibition makes a case "for reclaiming a Hogarth who worked, however uncomfortably, with the grain of society rather than against it." Perhaps. But what has kept Hogarth's work alive is quite another point of view: a sense that his pictures are deeply subversive, not only of elitist traditions of art or the spirit of his age, but of the way we usually look at things.

For looking itself often threatens to be subversive. Staring is impolite, if not illegal. Most people do not like to be looked at hard. For the subject, all portraits but the most flattering hint at caricature. Hence city-dwellers learn to cultivate an averted gaze, reconnoitering their surroundings obliquely or slantwise, avoiding the ultimate danger of catching somebody's eye. ("You lookin' at *me*?") In his self-portrait, Hogarth gazes directly, even brazenly at us—perhaps he is daring us to notice his scar—and even Trump the pug has wide-open eyes. Such rudeness breaks the implicit social contract that governs urban life and galleries of art; it denies the viewer the privilege of being invisible.

Hogarth's pictures of other people also tend to be rude. They pay very little respect to the way that someone might like to be seen, or not be seen. Every beauty spot brings to mind the thought of a hidden sore. Visiting France, Hogarth mocked so much of what he saw on the streets of Paris that his friends had to work hard to keep him from being mobbed. Eventually, while drawing the gate of Calais, he was denounced as a spy; the painting inspired by this affair is crammed with every freak a Francophobe could dream up. But Hogarth could never have gotten far as a spy, because his spying was too obvious. These images perform their trespass out in the open.

In one regard, however, looking at Hogarth proves to be a great comfort. The pictures promise us that everything will make sense, if we only look long enough. This is not a pleasure to be found in the streets of Calcutta. In Hogarth's continuing eighteenth-century city, each sign has a purpose. The time on the clock-face cannot always be trusted, and the clock might be broken. But sooner or later some clues will emerge, rewarding the patient viewer with the fun of the game and possibly even an answer. However crazy and mixed-up this world may be, it is also intelligible. And we can be trained to see it. That is the final, surprising message of Hogarth's intricate art. It is worth taking a look.

LAWRENCE LIPKING is the author of *Samuel Johnson: The Life of an Author*, forthcoming from Harvard University Press.

TRB *continued from page 6*

direct government regulation, the gas tax would also spur development of more fuel-efficient, less polluting cars. According to a recent front-page story in *The Wall Street Journal*, Detroit is already close to developing an alternative to the internal combustion engine; the export-conscious industry is doing so partly because other countries tax gasoline much more heavily than the United States. Which brings me to how the gas tax would help relations with the Europeans. They love to use international environmental meetings to blast the U.S. for not doing its share. The gas tax would put a stop to that.

Of the economic objections to a higher gas tax, the most serious is that it would hit the poor harder than the rich, because the poor spend a relatively larger portion of their income on basic items like fuel. But there are mitigating factors. First, the social costs of today's rampant driving are borne disproportionately by the poor; the poor would therefore benefit most from getting rid of them. Second, some alternatives to a higher gas tax—more local sales taxes to pay for new highways, further increases in the Social Security payroll tax—are regressive, too. Third, individuals have at least some power to keep their gasoline bills down by changing their own behavior.

There are, of course, many Americans who depend totally on their cars to get around, and who would have to drive a lot even if federal gas-tax policy had not been lavishly pro-car for so many years. Think of a teacher in Nebraska who must travel 50 miles round trip to the local elementary school. And each sparsely populated, driving-dependent state of the Great Plains has the same number of senators as its congested, mass-transit-oriented Northeastern counterparts.

But politicians don't hate the gas tax because it's regressive; and, ultimately, political resistance to raising the tax isn't a function of its impact on car-addicted states. (Even in the Northeast, the interests of suburbanites—those "soccer moms" in their Ford Explorers, remember?—usually trump those of city bus riders.) Politicians can't deal with the gas tax because its costs, modest as they are in real terms, are so *widely* distributed—and they must be paid by voters up front. Indeed, it's hard to think of an issue that better illustrates the American system's exquisite responsiveness to the public's perceived short-term self-interest, as opposed to the manifest long-term public good. Of course, if we can't swallow a little sacrifice now, during good economic times, how will we manage during tough times, when both the necessity and cost of the sacrifice are sure to be greater?

CHARLES LANE

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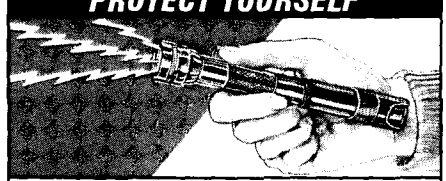
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NOBODY IS CONFIDENT THAT THE so-called patient bill of rights, which President Clinton's 34-member special commission on health care recently proposed, will make it through Congress. Although the proposal contains many important provisions—like guaranteeing consumers more access to specialists and the right to arbitration when insurers deny coverage for care—it will meet stiff resistance from the insurance lobbies, for whom such guarantees might mean less revenue. But one of the most controversial—and, in my view, one of the most important—provisions is already off the table, and it's not the insurers but the doctors who are responsible. That provision would have made records of malpractice suits against physicians, going back ten years, easily available to all Americans by posting them on the World Wide Web. I was present at the commission's final meeting, where the idea was discussed. "The best physicians are sued," said Dr. Thomas Reardon, who was representing the American Medical Association. And, just like that, the item—and the subject—disappeared.

I WASN'T SURPRISED. THE MEDICAL community has always argued that it's unfair to make physicians accountable for suits when so many of them are frivolous. According to the AMA, even the best doctors get bad results sometimes. Particularly in high-risk fields, such as anesthesiology, neurosurgery, or obstetrics, good doctors get slapped with nuisance suits. Thus, publicizing every lawsuit—or even every suit settled for money—would unfairly harm many good physicians. Or so the argument goes.

MY OWN EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS otherwise. In 1986, my wife Lena died when a senior doctor on staff at a Manhattan teaching hospital failed to diagnose a common, dangerous, but treatable complication of pregnancy. It's called pre-eclampsia, and it afflicts up to a fourth of women who have their first baby after the age of 35. Lena was a woman who had a career and also wanted a family. She was 36 when she died.

ONLY AFTER SCOURING COURTHOUSE basements did I discover much later that this highly recommended doctor had been sued six times before we consulted him. He has been sued six more times since, and of the dozen suits against him, no fewer than eight have ended in cash settlements—ranging from $40,000 to $1.5 million. He remains on staff, not just at the teaching hospital but on the rosters of the city's four biggest health plans. And, if you visit the website of the state Office of Professional Medical Conduct, you will see that he has a clean record. This is because in New York—as in all but two states of the Union—neither malpractice suits nor cash settlements are considered the public's business.

THE EXCEPTIONS SO FAR are Massachusetts and Florida. After newspapers in both states exposed malpractice scandals, officials made physicians' legal histories available to the public by posting them on the Web. In Florida, officials accomplished this by administrative fiat; in Massachusetts, the legislature made it law. Both states warn users of the online sites that the mere fact a doctor has been sued for negligence, or paid to settle, doesn't mean he was negligent or is generally incompetent. But what, then, does such information mean? I've asked roughly 100 doctors, representing a wide range of ages and specialties. Two of them—both sixtysomething veteran docs on the AMA payroll like Dr. Reardon—informed me that malpractice suits and payments never signify anything about the quality of a physician. The 98 others—including the editor of *The New England Journal of Medicine*—had a different opinion.

THEY SAID THAT MANY SUITS aren't worth the paper they're written on, and that insurance companies often settle just to avoid the hassle and the risk of a runaway jury. (In fact, a definitive study of more than 8,000 cases in New Jersey showed that, when insurers settle, it's usually because their own medical experts have concluded that actual malpractice has occurred.) But the doctors also told me that when a physician has an unusually high number of paid claims, relative to others in his specialty and locality, there may be cause for worry. These 98 doctors told me they'd think twice before sending a member of their own family to anyone like that; we certainly would have if we had known about the record of Lena's obstetrician.

I REALIZE THAT, AS A MATTER OF politics, accommodating physician lobbies is a necessary expedient. Right now, the administration and consumer advocates see physicians as powerful allies in their attempts to rein in for-profit managed care. Patients resent delays and rumored denials of treatment; physicians are angry over lost autonomy and lower salaries. The AMA supports the patient bill of rights, but if the president's commission had insisted upon disclosure of malpractice suits and payments, it might have driven the AMA back into the familiar embrace of Trent Lott. Republicans are already plotting to defeat the measure: Bill Thomas, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee on Health, has said, "When these folks talk about a patient bill of rights, it's politics"—as if his own party's aversion to health care reform had nothing to do with campaign contributions from the managed-care industry.

BUT PRINCIPLED CONSERvatives ought to support disclosure. If health care is a service or commodity for which we pay, then any true believer in the free market ought to favor making well-sourced, in-context information available, with the buyer—not the vendor—deciding what is relevant. That's how Wall Street works, where the Securities and Exchange Commission's website features not just sanctions against wayward brokers but also consent agreements, which are the equivalent of settlements. That's also the way it should be with the legal histories of those who sell health care—not just doctors but HMOs and hospitals, too.

LENA WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE agreed. A refugee from the old Soviet Union, she was a fan of both Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. For her, Reagan was the cheerful American populist; Maggie the woman who made her way in a man's world. Both seemed to exemplify the hopefulness of the West. Alas, I'm not so hopeful about disclosure reform's immediate prospects: it's going to take time, it's going to take scandals, and it's not going to come about inside the Beltway. If disclosure becomes law, it will happen state by state. Those states where the media make disclosure an issue will follow the path of Massachusetts and Florida sooner; those where the media are derelict, such as New York, will lag. But sooner or later the genius of the marketplace and the rush of the information age will prevail. And we'll all be better off because of it.

EDWARD GROSSMAN

EDWARD GROSSMAN has written for *The Wall Street Journal* and *The American Spectator*, and has covered health issues for *Worth* magazine.

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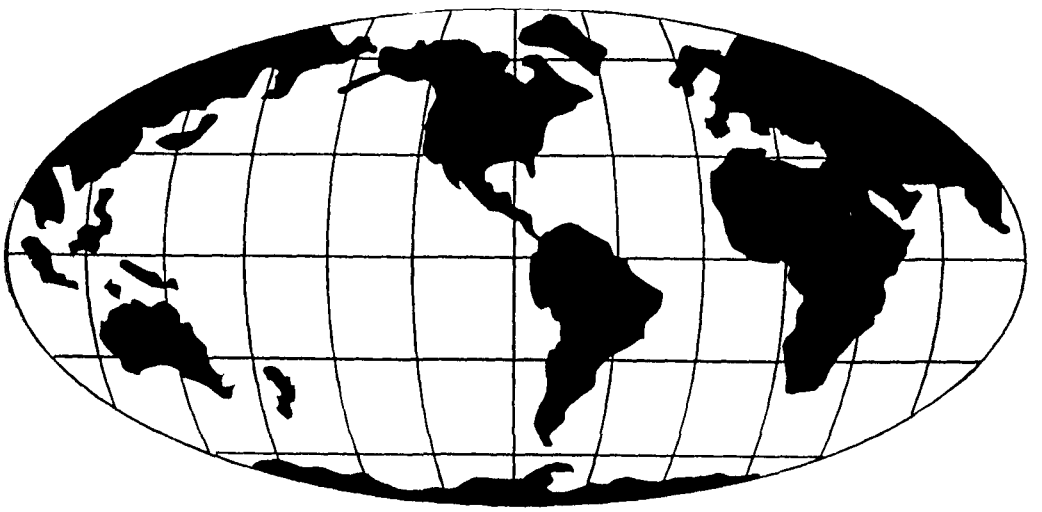

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Theodore Waitt

Gateway 2000. North Sioux City, SD. 34. Married, 4 children.

Talked out of joining family cattle business. By father. Left college senior year to start computer mail order business in farmhouse. With $10,000 start-up loan secured by grandmother's CD.

"Everybody was heading to Silicon Valley. So I picked a cornfield."

Cofounded Gateway 2000 with partner, Mike Hammond, 1985. Direct-market PC seller and manufacturer based in South Dakota. First year revenues $100,000. Explosive growth due to low costs, fast service. Expanded overseas, 1993. Marketing coup: chose Holstein as company mascot.

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1996 revenues: $5 billion.

Started reading Forbes as a student at the University of Iowa in 1984.

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